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ROADSIDE

A COMEDY

BY

LYNN RIGGS

SAMUEL FRENCH

Founded 1830 Incorporated 1899

25 West 45th St., New York, N. Y.

811 West 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

PLAYS BY LYNN RIGGS

KNIVES FROM SYRIA
SUMP'N LIKE WINGS
BIG LAKE
A LANTERN TO SEE BY
GREEN GROW THE LILACS
ROADSIDE

ROADSIDE

AM

ROADSIDE

A Comedy

BY

LYNN RIGGS

FOREWORD BY ARTHUR HOPKINS

SAMUEL FRENCH
Thos. R. Edwards Managing Director
NEW YORK LOS ANGELES
SAMUEL FRENCH LTD. LONDON
1930

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY FATHER

FOREWORD

In *Roadside* Lynn Riggs brings an unfamiliar richness to the American theatre. Here is something of the deep soil of our changing country. Here is flavor and sweep, unlike that to be found in any other people, and not much longer to be found among us. Here is the America which is fast disappearing into a mechanized, regimented, tasteless regime—a regime where mediocrity preens itself and individualism is a form of anarchy.

Riggs has caught our fading glory and left it for posterity. It is my belief that his play will reach posterity. It has the feel of survival. I believe it to be the first American dramatic classic. This play confirms my conviction that only poets should write plays. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Riggs.

—Arthur Hopkins.

The following is a copy of the programme of the first performance of "Roadside," as produced at the Longacre Theatre, New York, Friday evening, September 26, 1930.

ARTHUR HOPKINS

PRESENTS

"ROADSIDE"

A Comedy

By LYNN RIGGS

SETTINGS BY ROBERT EDMOND JONES

COSTUMES BY EVERETT SHINN

STAGED BY MR. HOPKINS

CAST (IN ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE)

Pap Rader	Played by	*Frederick Burton*
Buzzey Hale	" "	*Jack Byrne*
Hannie Rader	" "	*Ruthelma Stevens*
Red Ike	" "	*Gilbert Squarey*
Black Ike	" "	*Kendall Foster*
Texas	" "	*Ralph Bellamy*
Town Marshal	" "	*Roderick Maybee*
Neb	" "	*Frank I. Frayne*
Judge Snodgrass	" "	*Harry Hermsen*
Mrs. Foster	" "	*Anne Tonetti*

SCENES

Act I

By the side of a road through the woods in Indian Territory. Sunset of a June day in 1905.

Act II

Scene 1—The same. Dawn, the next morning.

Scene 2—A courtroom in Verdigree Switch. Two hours later.

Act III

The roadside again. An hour or so later.

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

By the side of a road through the woods in Indian Territory, the year 1905. The back end of a covered wagon, with boxes for stepping down out of it, can be seen at left. The road, coming in at the back from deep in the woods, has been widened here by hundreds of campers; charred logs, ashes, last year's leaves,—litter the roadside. A large, black, three-legged pot, with a fire under it, stands at the right. Some old camp chairs, a battered stool or two, dishes, tin pans, etc. It is near sundown of a day in June, and the air is summery and sweet.

BUZZEY HALE, *a little, bluish, dried-up farmer, is sitting disconsolately by the fire.* PAP RADER, *a tall, wiry, good-natured old man, with dirty, falling-apart clothes, comes from around the wagon.*

PAP (*snorting*)

Set there a-pinin'. Damned if you doan look like a ole turkey buzzard! No wonder Hannie called you Buzzey.

BUZZEY (*shortly*)

That ain't it. Buzzey is short—fer beautiful.

PAP

Beautiful! Hunh! If you're beautiful, I'm a bob-tailed witch! Looky here, I doan see whut you make outa follerin' us around anyway, Mister Turkey Buz-

zard. They ain't nuthin' dead around here fer you to chaw on. Clappin' yer wings! And damned if that sorry face of yourn ain't blue, too, same as a buzzard! After you've et, things must be a sight. I ain't wantin' you around.

BUZZEY

I'm gonna *be* around, though.

PAP

Yeow, you'll be.

BUZZEY (*with asperity*)

If it hadn't a-been fer you, Hannie wouldn't a-left me in the first place. You done it with yer damned ole covered wagon. Tellin' her about the roads again. Remindin' her of when she was a girl ridin' hell-bent from Arkansas to Panhandle alongside you an' yer ole womern. You brung her up, I'll say you brung her up, with her ways! Wonder I ever married her a-tall an' her with a ole man like you couldn't read a sign on a hitch-post. Whut'd you think about? Ridin' on the road, that's all you think about. From here to Texas, and back to Wyoming and all over the cattle roads, and little shike-poke towns from here to Missouri. Stealin' chickens and roas'n'ears and sich, to keep you alive. (*In disgust.*) The road! That's all you think about!

PAP

Whut you think about is plowin'.

BUZZEY

Yeow, and makin' hay and plantin' corn and oats

and feedin' cattle and shoats—livin' outa the ground, is whut I think about. I'd like to know whut's better?

PAP

This *here's* better. An' I'm tellin' you Hannie'd *orter* divorced you like she did. You ain't no kind of a man, and yore life ain't no kind of a life fer Hannie to be havin'. She's a strappin' girl that wants to roam, like me, and see life 'stid of a milk churn.

BUZZEY

I'll git her back, you'll see. If I have to foller you up Salt Crick.

PAP (*chuckling*)

If you foller us too long, yer crops'll all be ruint. Here it is June an' I'll bet yer hay ain't even first cut.

BUZZEY

It's cut, Pap Rader. I got money to h'ar me h'ard hands.

PAP

And while you ain't there how hard you reckon they work? (*Chortling.*) I used to be a h'ard hand myself. When ole man Hardgraves was away we'd set down and not git up till his buggy wheels rattled the pike comin' home from Joplin.

BUZZEY

When *I* h'ar men, I h'ar *men*. Red Ike and Black Ike Brazier—that's the kinda men I h'ar. I've knowed 'em from boys up. Ever since Hannie married me,

Red Ike and Black Ike has worked on my farm same as if it uz theirn, and ud git the last drap of growin' out of it.

PAP

Well, I hope yer right. 'Cause if you ain't, you'll git sick and turn bluer'n you be a'ready.

BUZZEY

I'm right, Pap Rader.

PAP

Ain't nobody right fer too long at a time, I noticed.

HANNIE'S VOICE (*from inside the wagon*)

Pap!

PAP

Whut is it?

HANNIE (*excitedly*)

Pap, come 'ere!

PAP

Come 'ere, yerself. I'm busy. (*To* BUZZEY.) If you doan git sense enough to stop follerin' us from county to county the way you been doin' fer a week, you'll sleep here on the cold ground till you die of the shakin' aygers.

HANNIE (*from the wagon*)

God damn it, Pap! You heared me, you tarnation ole fool! Come a-runnin'! Cain't you hear nuthin'?

PAP

Well, whut is it? Come out here and tell it.

HANNIE (*sticking her head out*)

I ain't got so many clothes on. And I don't expect to come out and give that ole buzzard no free show. He's crazy enough fer a womern 'thout seein' one naked. Case you'd like to know it, that hound of yourn is eatin' up yer hog shoulder.

PAP (*flying around the wagon and out of sight*)

Well, why in blazes didden you say so!

HANNIE

I said so.

[*She withdraws her head. A hound lets out a dismal wail and a series of short yelps.*

BUZZEY (*going up to the wagon*)

Whur'd yer Pap git a hog shoulder, Hannie? Guess he bought it—

HANNIE (*putting her head out again*)

Bought it, huh? Stole it offen the slaughter house at Claremore.

BUZZEY

I knowed it.

HANNIE

You're so smart.

[*She withdraws.*

PAP (*coming around the wagon*)

I saved that dog from drownin' and this is the way he does me. A good hog shoulder plumb ruint. (*He holds up a mutilated hog shoulder.*) Here, might as

well have it all now you've ruint it, you yeller cur. (*He throws the shoulder back to the dog.*) I'm goin' down along the crick bank and see whut I c'n see.

BUZZEY (*nastily*)

Watermelons ain't ripe yit, Pap.

PAP

Who said watermelons?

BUZZEY

Roas'n'ears'll be ripe in July, though.

PAP

I'm gonna git a mite of hay fer the horses. Stir that stew if you're gonna stick around here. You'll be wantin' some in yer measly gullet afore long. (*He starts out. Turning back.*) Looky here, you let Hannie alone. She ain't gonna marry you *again*. And she ain't gonna have no *truck* with you's long's I'm around, you hear me?

BUZZEY

I hear you.

PAP

You better heed me.

[*He goes out.*

[BUZZEY *stirs the stew, tastes it, and is about to pour some in a bowl when he hears singing down the road. He puts the bowl down hastily, wrinkles his forehead, trying to make out something.* HANNIE *comes out of the wagon and down the steps. She is a buxom, well-made girl about twenty, with black snapping eyes and*

a rich, vulgar, earthy humor. She crosses over past the fire.

BUZZEY

Hannie. (*She stops.*) Hannie, you ain't runnin' away from me, air you?

HANNIE

I doan know you from Adam.

BUZZEY

Don't you do me this a-way, Hannie.

HANNIE

What a-way?

BUZZEY

Not havin' no words with me, even.

HANNIE

Why're you follerin' us all the way from Vinita, me and Pap?

BUZZEY

I cain't he'p it. Cain't you come back to me?

HANNIE

Not to you ner no one like you. I want me a man, not a broomstick. Besides, I had enough of bein' a farmer's wife.

BUZZEY

It was 'cause you'd been s' sharp to me, I done whut I done. You wouldn't a-got no divorce from me if someone hadden fixed it up fer me to be found the way I was.

HANNIE

Oh, woulden I? Sich a womern the Ikes found you with, too! From all account. You musta been in a bad way. Who fixed it then?

BUZZEY

I ain't sayin'.

HANNIE

Well, whoever fixed it, you fixed yerself with me.

BUZZEY

Hannie, it won't never happen again.

HANNIE

It can happen till you're blue in the face, fer all I keer. Whut I cain't figger out is how I ever come to marry you in the first place.

BUZZEY

It was love, that's whut it was.

HANNIE

Love? Lemme look at you.

BUZZEY

Well, *look* at me, and you'll see.

HANNIE (*looking him over*)

Is that a new suit you got on?

BUZZEY

Brand spankin'!

HANNIE

It don't seem to improve you none. Well, now le's see. You shore I was married to you?

BUZZEY

You know blame well you was!

HANNIE

I reckon you're right. All I c'n recollect was once about two year ago it was Spring, and Pap and me stopped by that little branch that run th'ough yore cow pasture. And you come down to set the dogs on us. When you seen me—you didn't. So I fell in a daze er sump'n—and when I come to, it seemed like I was kinda married to you— All on account of it bein' Spring, and you not settin' the dogs on us—and one other thing. I was all set to marry *someone* along about then—and I never thought to be picky and choosy.

BUZZEY (*huffily*)

You coulda done worse. I had me plenty of land and a way to take keer of you, didn't I?

HANNIE

Yeah. But that don't mean a thing to me. I could take keer of myself the day I was borned. Yep, I believe I could! Anyway, I can now. And if I ever marry again, it'll have to be to a world-slingin', star-traipsin' son of a gun that's more my match than you air. And when I do run onto sich a feller, I miss my guess if cracks of lightnin' don't burn up the

country fer fourteen miles around. So look out you don't git scorched.

[*She starts out.*

BUZZEY

Hannie, come on back! The—the ca'ves even doan know me. And old Roan kicks at me ever time I go in the barn. They won't have nuthin' to do with *me*. They're missin' you, I reckon.

HANNIE

Well, I been missed by ca'ves and horses afore. But I never heared of no dumb animals dyin' of a broke heart. Quit a-botherin' me now.

BUZZEY

Aw, Hannie, lemme go with you. Air you goin' to pick up sticks?

HANNIE

No, I ain't.

BUZZEY

Er find wild ingerns? I'll help you do whutever you're a-goin' fer. Guess I'll foller you.

HANNIE

Guess you won't, Mister Buzzey Hale. (*Roguishly.*) I ain't gonna do nuthin' you c'n he'p me do.

[*She goes out.*

[*The song down the road comes nearer.* BUZZEY *listens, uncertain and worried. Then he straightens up decisively and is a rod of hot anger, when* RED IKE *and* BLACK IKE BRAZIER *burst into sight through the*

trees along the road. They have on straw hats, overalls, dirty blue shirts, heavy brogans, and are leaning on each other's shoulders, singing loudly: "They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas!" BLACK IKE'S *hair is coal black,* RED'S *a flaming red. They are stupid and elfin at the same time. Seeing* BUZZEY, *they stop short, and make a sudden instinctive move to run away, which they quickly suppress.*

BUZZEY

Well, by God, it's you, is it!

RED IKE (*swallowing hard*)

Yeow, it's us.

BLACK IKE

Red Ike and Black Ike—*both* of us.

[*They begin singing again, and sing right through* BUZZEY'S *angry speech.*

THE IKES (*singing*)

They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas,
They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas,
They chew tobaccer thin and they spit it on their chin,
And they lick it in again in Kansas.

The people don't wed in Kansas,
The people don't wed in Kansas,
The people don't wed—er so I've heared it said,
They jist go to bed in Kansas.

They cook in a pot in Kansas,
They cook in a pot in Kansas,
They cook in a pot, and they eat it while it's hot,
And they git the Guess What in Kansas.

BUZZEY (*furiously*)

Red Ike and Black Ike, hell! Of all the sorry, mangy— Whut in hell're you doin' here anyhow? Whut'd you mean flyin' off leavin' my farm to run itself? How long you been gone? You're two days away now! I'll bet the hogs've died fer slop! I'll bet the hay's burnt up in the field! I'll bet the corn's jist bakin' in the row—

RED IKE

Is this yore campin' outfit?

BUZZEY (*outraged*)

Campin'!

BLACK IKE

You a campin' man now, Mr. Hale? We didden know whur you'd went at.

RED IKE

You got some soup?

BUZZEY

Soup!

BLACK IKE

We're powerful hongry. Ain't et in a day.

RED IKE

Been a-singin' to keep up our sperrits.

BUZZEY

Singin'!

BLACK IKE

Et some strawberries, though.

BUZZEY (*violently*)

I don't keer if you starve! Whut'd you leave my farm fur! Thought I could trust it to you.

BLACK IKE

Mister Hale, we never thunk to a-run onto you, I swear to my time. We didden know whur you was, not showin' up. Thought mebbe you drownded in the bottom some'ers.

RED IKE

We was a-lookin' fer someone else.

BLACK IKE

Is this the—? (*He is looking over past the wagon.*) By gum it is!

RED IKE

It's the wagon!

BUZZEY

You git back quick's you c'n hotfoot it, both of you. I'd orter thrash you 'thin a inch of yer lives! *Git*, I tell you!

RED IKE

We're gonna stay.
[*He sits down, cross-legged.*

BLACK IKE (*following suit*)

We're gonna set here and stay, ain't we, Red?

BUZZEY

You're f'ard, both of you!

RED IKE

Suits me. Cain't make *me* mad.

BUZZEY

I'd orter f'ar you.

BLACK IKE

We're a 'ready done f'ard.

BUZZEY

No, you ain't! You agreed to he'p me git the hay in and stay th'ough the thrashin'.

RED IKE

We'll he'p you.

BUZZEY (*helplessly*)

Well, don't set there. Git back like I told you.

RED IKE

We jist come.

BUZZEY

Look here. I'd orten't to do this—you're both so onnery—but I'll give you five dollars.

RED IKE

Le's see it.

[BUZZEY *hands him a bill.*

BLACK IKE

Le's see another'n.

[BUZZEY *hands over another.*

[RED IKE *and* BLACK IKE *look at each other, then hand the bills back.*

RED IKE

Don't hurry us.

BUZZEY

You better take it. Why, you're damn fools! It'll buy you near ten plugs of Horseshoe.

BLACK IKE (*spitting*)

'Druther chew Star Navy.

BUZZEY

Well, Star Navy.

BLACK IKE (*irrelevantly*)

Chew Star Navy and spit ham gravy.

BUZZEY

Look here, if I give you ten dollars apiece—no, I won't give you ten dollars.

RED IKE

Woulden take it.

BUZZEY (*suspiciously*)

How much you tryin' to bleed outa me?

RED IKE

Not any.

BUZZEY

Whut'd you come fer, anyway?

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RED IKE (*evasively*)

Oh,—jist seen the purty road and started off a-follerin' it.

BLACK IKE

You cain't keep no colt in the pasture when it's Summer. We was puttin' up the mules and I says to Red, "Red," I says, "How about it?" And Red says, "How about it yerself?" So up we got and away we went till we come to Verdigree Switch. There, they was a great to-do of a man shootin' his way into jail, so we hurry up and here we be.

BUZZEY

You got sump'n up yer sleeve.

RED IKE

Why, Mr. Hale, no. *No*, we ain't! Mebbe you're right, though. Mebbe we *have* got sump'n up our sleeves. (*Breaking off, excitedly.*) Oh!

[*He scrambles to his feet.*

BLACK IKE (*doing likewise*)

It's her!

RED IKE

She's a-comin'!

BLACK IKE

She's here!

HANNIE (*coming in, ecstatically*)

Hello! Howdy! Red Ike and Black Ike! *Thought* I heared yer voices!

RED IKE

Thought we'd find you!—

BLACK IKE

Knowed we'd find you!—

RED IKE

—'f we looked long enough—

BLACK IKE

—'n in the right place—

RED IKE

—'n on the right road.

HANNIE

If I ain't missed you!—

RED IKE

We missed *you*. Whutta you mean runnin' off?—

BLACK IKE

Flyin' the coop, kickin' over the trace chains? Come on back, what you say?

RED IKE

'Spect us to work 'thout you around?

BLACK IKE

Marry the ole buzzard again.

RED IKE

Put up with him.

HANNIE

Quit it! I'm s' glad to see you, I'll be promisin' to, in a minute!

BUZZEY

Hannie! Go on, promise! I'll be good to you if you come back—and marry me again. Git you a carpet sweeper.

BLACK IKE

Go on, promise! Think of me and Red. Not hardly able to do no work 'thout you around.

RED IKE

Think of me and Black. In the field honin' fer you.

BUZZEY

Think of *me*, why don't you, Hannie?

HANNIE

Now, now! Quit it! I'm gonna think of myself a while. Here, set down and eat some stew.

BUZZEY (*hopefully*)

You ain't said you *wouldn't* come back.

HANNIE

And I ain't said I *would.*

[*She gives them all stew. They sit down and eat.*

BLACK IKE

We're shore hongry.

RED IKE

Ain't et in a day.

HANNIE (*happily*)

'S jist like ole times. Me and Buzzey and you Ikes settin' around. If I ain't missed you! You Ikes is

purt' near as crazy as me. Well, not quite, but purt' near. Whut you have to do 'th a farm is sump'n I cain't make out, though.

RED IKE

If *you* like it, *we* like it. Ain't that so, Black?

[BLACK *nods agreement.*

HANNIE

I did like yer ole farm *some*, Buzzey—

BUZZEY (*delighted*)

It's jist like it always was, Hannie. There a-waitin'—

HANNIE

Mostly on account of the Ikes bein' on it. And another thing. I like to hotfoot it all over creation—and that's a fact. But ever once in a while I git so homesick I'd purt' nigh kick Paw in the pants and hotfoot it back. I wanta set quiet once in a while and drink milk out of a cold well.

BUZZEY

We got milk, Hannie. Ever since ole Reddy come in with her calf—

HANNIE

But Paw's sich a goer. Has to cross that next crick, or make the next aidge of town 'fore sundown. Him and me don't hit it off complete. Listen to me, I'm gonna tell you sump'n. Men is s' crazy. Some wants to set on a farm till they dry up and blow away—like Buzzey here. Or some wants to go streakin' across the country, hell-bent fer high water—like Paw. If

they was jist a half-way crazy man who liked to streak, and liked to set—*both.* A nonsensical strappin' man who had a good time settin' *or* streakin'—but who had a *good time*— (*She breaks off.*) Now tell me things.

BLACK IKE

Whut about?

HANNIE

Oh, anything. The way you used to.

BLACK IKE (*to* RED)

'Bout the ghostes?

RED IKE

On Mabel Gardner's bed-post?

HANNIE

I heared that.

BLACK IKE

I know! The man in the sack.

RED IKE

Chinaman!

BLACK IKE

Sewed in a gunny-sack.

RED IKE

Mad as a steer!

BLACK IKE

Hung up to the ceiling!

RED IKE

Ramped and teared and snorted!

HANNIE

I heared that, too.

BLACK IKE (*disappointed*)

Oh! She's heared that. (*Reviving.*) Oh, I know! We'll tell her about Texas! Wanta hear about Texas?

HANNIE

Whut about Texas?

BLACK IKE

Well, we seen sich a sight, didden we, Red?

RED IKE

Down at the Switch as we come th'ough.

BLACK IKE

A man th'owed in the jail fer gettin' drunk.

RED IKE

He got drunk and crazy and wild. And he yelled. My, how he yelled!

BLACK IKE

Whut was it he yelled? "Borned in Texas—" How'd it go?

RED IKE (*loudly*)

Wild and reckless,
Borned in Texas,
Suckled by a bear,
Steel backbone,

Tail screwed on,
Twelve feet long,
Dare any son-of-a-bitch to step on it!

HANNIE

Purty good!

BUZZEY (*disgusted*)

Purty good!

RED IKE

Nen the marshal got a-holt of him, and the jedge said: "Twelve days in jail, one fer ever foot of yer long tail." So they went to th'ow him in jail and he kicked the jedge offen the bench and made jist plum hash outa the courtroom first 'fore they got him in the calaboose.

HANNIE (*rapturously*)

Good!

BUZZEY (*disgusted*)

Good!

RED IKE

My, a big, hulky, curly-headed, han'some ring-tail-tooter, wuzn't he, Black?

HANNIE

And whur is he?

RED IKE

Sh! Down the road a piece.

HANNIE

Outa jail?

BLACK IKE

Shore. Me'n Red seen him, 's we come along. Like to scairt us to death, too. Come up on us, and said, "I broke outa jail, and if you tell on me, I'll break yer head." My, we woulden tell on him, would we, Red?

HANNIE (*thoughtfully*)

Down the road there?

BLACK IKE (*pointing back*)

That road right there.

BUZZEY

You ain't interested in a man like that, air you, Hannie? A man 'at breaks laws, and don't have no home, and goes shootin' around—

HANNIE (*cryptically*)

Shet up about it. I hate a man like that.

BUZZEY

That's whut I thought. Here comes yer pap.

[PAP RADER *comes in with an armful of hay for the horses. He drops it in astonishment.*

PAP RADER

Red Ike and Black Ike (*Gleefully.*) I knowed it, I knowed it! (*To* BUZZEY.) Whut'd I tell you about h'ard hands!—Hee! Hee! Knowed they wouldn't work 'thout you around!

VOICE (*off back*)

Wild and reckless. Borned in Texas!—

HANNIE (*rushing over to* PAP)

Hey, Pap, they's a man comin' along the road! (*In an excited rush, thumping* PAP *on the chest at every sentence.*) Wild and reckless, borned in Texas! A tail twelve feet long! He fit his way into jail and outa jail, and he's comin' along that road there, and heavens and earth, whut're you gonna do!

VOICE (*off back*)

Steel backbone, tail screwed on—

HANNIE

Hear that! It's him! I'm gonna run in the wagon, quick!

PAP

Why, Hannie! Nuthin' won't hurt you. We're here.

BUZZEY (*coming over*)

Don't you be a-feard, little womern. I'll pertect you.

HANNIE

Pertect me? (*She laughs uproariously.*) Pertect a doodle-bug! I'm gonna go in the wagon—

BUZZEY

Whut you goin' in the wagon fer, Hannie?

HANNIE

I'm gonna put flour on my face and purty myself up, that's whut fer.

[*She goes up into the wagon.*

[*The two men stare after her, uncomprehendingly.*

BUZZEY (*puzzled*)

Now whut on earth's come over her?

PAP

Damned if I know. Whut's this about a man?

BUZZEY

Why, Red and Black says this is a wild crazy handsome man, that beat up the jedge and smashed up the courtroom and broke outa jail down here in Verdigree and says he was borned in Texas, and he's comin' along the road and—

PAP

Borned in *whur?*

BUZZEY

Texas. My, I cain't make out whut that womern is up to!

PAP (*with an amused chuckle*)

No one cain't make out whut Hannie is up to. I reckon I'll have some of that there stew 'fore it's all gone.

[*He crosses over to the pot and is helping himself, when a tall, rangy, slightly-drunk man in rough clothes and without a hat, comes into sight. An empty pistol holster hangs at his belt. The sun has set by this time, and it begins to grow dark. The man stops short, seeing the four men.*

MAN

Now, who in hell—? (*Uncertainly.*) Howdy—

PAP

Howdy yerself, Mister.

MAN (*with relief*)

Thought you might be the marshal. Shore don't want

to see that marshal again! It wouldn't be safe—fer *him*. (*Seeing the* IKES.) Hello, if here ain't the two little twins I seen down the road a piece—

RED IKE

We ain't twins.

BLACK IKE

We're cousins.

MAN

Cousins? You look like twins to me.

RED IKE (*disarmingly*)

Have it yer own way, Mister. Ain't no harm in bein' twins, if you say so.

MAN (*generously*)

I'll tell you, though, I'd jist as soon you'd be cousins as twins. I don't wanta argy about it.

RED IKE

Suit yerself, Mister Texas.

TEXAS

How'd you know my name's Texas?

RED IKE

Oh, we know all about you!

BLACK IKE

Wild and reckless, borned in Texas!

TEXAS

That don't make my name Texas.

BLACK IKE

Oh, we know yer name ain't Texas.

TEXAS

You do?

BLACK IKE

We jist called you that.

TEXAS

Well, jist the same—my name's Texas.

RED IKE

It is?

TEXAS

You don't think it ud be Arkansaw, do you?

RED IKE

I tell you, Mister, Texas is as good a name as any.

BLACK IKE

Better'n any!

RED IKE

Jist about.

BLACK IKE

It plumb *is!*

TEXAS (*indicating* PAP)

Is this here yer Paw?

RED IKE

It's Pap Rader. He ain't *our* pap, though.

BLACK IKE

Not as we know of.

TEXAS

Howd' do, Mr. Rader.

PAP (*cordially*)

We been hearin' about you, Mr. Texas. Hear you beat up the jedge, and broke outa jail, and raised hell and high water complete, down here in Verdigree.

TEXAS (*modestly*)

Oh, it wasn't so much.

PAP

Sounded purty good to me.

TEXAS

Well, I—I was jist feelin' a little good.

PAP

It don't do to be so bashful about it. Have some stew?

TEXAS

Don't mind if I do. They don't seem to have no short order counter in the Verdigree calaboose.

[PAP *gives him stew. He sits down and begins to eat.*

PAP

They ort to put one in.

TEXAS (*hopefully*)

Mebbe they will some day, when they git to realizin'.

PAP

I shore hope so.

TEXAS

They won't be able to git no one *in* their old jail, they don't do *sump'n'*.

PAP

This here is Mr. Hale.

TEXAS

Howd' do, Mr. Hale.

BUZZEY (*sullenly*)

Howdy.

TEXAS (*politely*)

You look porely.

BUZZEY (*huffily*)

I don't know.

TEXAS

I tell you, you look like a man hadn't had his fill of sump'n—I cain't make out whut.

RED IKE (*brightly*)

Guessed it that time, Mr. Texas! His wife jist divorced him.

TEXAS

Oh!

BUZZEY (*furiously*)

Shet up yer mouth, Red Ike, I'll knock you down!

(*He stamps off into the woods muttering.*) Folks a-buttin' into business that don't concern 'em—

TEXAS

He kinda takes it to heart, don't he?
[*He looks after him.*

PAP

Well, it tain't no joke to lose a womern.

TEXAS (*sympathetically*)

No, that's right.

PAP

'Specially one as strappin' and full of the devil as the one *he* lost.

TEXAS

Well, she musta been blind she married a man like that.

PAP

Well, she hadn't saw many men when she married Buzzey.

TEXAS

I reckon not! (*Judicially.*) A womern ort to marry her a man that ud show her a good time.

PAP

Yep, that's whut I think.

TEXAS

If this here womern's so strappin' and full of the ole devil like you say, someone shore ort to kick her paw in the pants fer lettin' her marry a man like that un.

PAP

You know, Mr. Texas, that's whut I been a-thinkin'.

TEXAS

And if I ever meet up with him, I'm gonna do some heavy bootin' myself—right whur he sets down—

THE IKES

Hee, hee!
[*They shake with mirth.*

TEXAS

Whut're you hee-heein' about?

PAP

Go and git some wood, 'fore I smack you one. Both of you!

RED IKE

Hee, hee, hee! You *got* wood, Mr. Rader!

BLACK IKE

Pine and hickory both! Scads of it! Hee, hee, hee, oh my-o!

PAP (*advancing on him*)

The liver of a rattlesnake! (*The* IKES *scramble out of reach.*) Git some buckets there under the wagon and bring some warter from the crick. Git a move on! (*The* IKES *go out obediently, snickering.*) Have to excuse them little shavers. (*He taps his head.*) Not bad—not quite wrong, but not quite right. You never know whut they're a-gonna do next. (*He looks into the pot.*) Guess we've et up all the stew, so I'll

jist warsh out the pot, agin they fetch me that warter.

[*He pours a small bucket of water in it, rinses it around, and pours it out.*

TEXAS (*helpfully*)

Look out, you don't burn yerself.

[*He rolls and lights a cigarette.*

PAP

I been burned by better pots'n this'n.

TEXAS

You always traveled around like this?

PAP

Ever since my old womern died—and before that. Why, I've saw this country when you couldn't git th'ough it, it was so tangled up in br'ars.

TEXAS (*thoughtfully*)

They's things worse'n br'ars.

PAP

Whutta you mean?

TEXAS

Well, I tell you, pardner, it used to be a feller could go 'round and about, and enjoy hisself. Now it looks like somebody's tuck it into his head to put up a lot of rules and regulations a feller cain't make head ner tail of, and *cain't even remember*. Why, they jist put me in jail fer gettin' drunk and yellin'— You'd think it was a sin to use yer voice out loud!

PAP (*sympathetically*)

I know jist the way you feel. Now, take me—they's plenty to eat in this yere country, berries and roas'n'ears and rabbits—and it looks like they call it stealin' to fill yer belly.

TEXAS

Yep, I hate rules, and I hate fences. I tell you, Mr. Rader, we orten't to stand fer either one of 'em.

PAP

You feel that-a-way, too?

TEXAS

Criminee, yes! I don't wanta bother no one. And I don't want no one a-botherin' me.

PAP (*putting out his hand*)

Shake, pardner. We'll git along.

[HANNIE, *primped and powdered extravagantly, comes down the steps of the wagon.*

HANNIE

Who's that you're a-shakin' hands with, Pap? (*Her eyes sparkle with good-humor.*) I cain't make out nuthin' but a smudge and a pair of legs.

TEXAS (*grinning*)

This here smudge is me, lady. And the legs, too—I reckon they're mine.

HANNIE

Well, I seen worse.

PAP

Make you acquainted to my daughter Hannie, Mr. Texas.

TEXAS

Howd' do?

HANNIE

Mr. *Texas?* Thought that was a state.

TEXAS (*largely*)

Oh, Texas is named after me.

HANNIE

Oh!

TEXAS

And I'm a kind of a state *myself*, in a way of talkin'.

HANNIE

State of Smart-Alec, I'd call it.

TEXAS

Looky here, Miss Hannie, I've spanked women like you.

HANNIE

You ain't even *saw* a womern like me, let alone spanked one.

TEXAS (*baffled*)

You got a kind of a jokin' daughter, ain't you, Mr. Rader?

PAP (*chuckling*)

Blamed 'f I know when she *is* or when she *ain't!*

HANNIE

When you've saw as many funny lookin' sights as *I* have, you'll turn to jokin', too, Mr. Texas—

TEXAS (*ruffled*)

To hell with you!

HANNIE (*blandly*)

It eases yer mind quite a bit.

TEXAS

Air you meanin' me, *personal*, as funny-lookin'?

HANNIE

Why, I wouldn't tromp on yer toes by meanin' anything like that! Not right off, jist after meetin' you, anyhow.

TEXAS (*grinning, uncertainly*)

I think I'd sorta like you, 'f I could jist make out whut you was up to.

HANNIE (*sweetly*)

Ain't that nice of you, though? Well, that's easy. I heared about you from the Ikes. And when I heared a loud shoutin' voice down the road a piece, I run in the wagon, and purtied myself up 'fore you got here—

TEXAS (*delighted*)

You did?

HANNIE,

Put on a clean dress, and put most a pint of flour on my face, to make me look nice.

TEXAS (*with huge delight*)

My goodness!

HANNIE

And smellamagoody pe'fume! A half a bottle. Smell me.

TEXAS

Shore smell fine!

HANNIE (*wickedly*)

But now 'at you're here, and I've been made acquainted to you, I'm a good mind to change my dress again, and scrub my face 'th soap-suds and lye.

TEXAS (*flabbergasted*)

Aw!

HANNIE

Er even jist put on my nightgown, go right to bed, and sleep like a log, a-floatin' down the river.

TEXAS

I'll spank you yit, Miss Smarty!

HANNIE

Ketchin' 'fore hangin', Mr. Texas! (*She sits down in the circle of firelight.*) Whur was you bound fer, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS (*scratching his head*)

Well,—I—I had *aimed* to make it up to Claremore 'fore it got night. (*Retaliating.*) They's a womern up there who would be right glad to see me. A red-headed one.

HANNIE

Is that so? Well, I guess the law down here at Verdigree kinda helt you up a bit, didn't it?

TEXAS

Yeah, I guess it did.

HANNIE

And it's too bad to let that womern jist *cry* all night. Is they anything a-hinderin' you now?

TEXAS

If you was as smart 'th yer eyes as you air 'th yer tongue, you'd see it's comin' night on me.

HANNIE

And if you was as smart 'th yer tongue as you air 'th yer eyes, you'd ast 'f you could stay here all night and sleep by the f'ar—so the varmints won't bother you.

TEXAS (*tentatively*)

I might do that.

HANNIE

Less'n you're agin' bein' crowded. Our roomin' house is fillin' up fast, from the looks of things.

TEXAS

Ain't it this full all the time?

HANNIE

Mostly they's jist Pap and me. But tonight it looks like we're full up and runnin' over with whut you might call *men*.

TEXAS

How is that?

HANNIE

A case of "flies to the honey," if you ast me.

TEXAS

You bein' the *honey*, I guess.

HANNIE (*modestly*)

Well, it ain't Pap.

TEXAS

'D you mean to tell me, all these yere men—?

HANNIE

I don't mean to tell you nuthin'—

TEXAS

The Ikes? And that Buzzey, is that his name?

HANNIE (*contemptuously*)

Oh, Buzzey!

TEXAS (*to* PAP)

Why, Mr. Rader, you told me Buzzey's womern had jist divorced him, and he was all broke up about her.

PAP

Well, if I told you, that's the way it is.

TEXAS (*astounded*)

Why, why— (*To* HANNIE.) It's *you!* You're his wife!

HANNIE

Was—but *ain't.*

TEXAS

My God!

HANNIE (*helpfully*)

He's jist a-tryin' to git me back.

PAP (*quickly*)

Guess I'll jist mosey along and warter the horses while I'm able!

[*He goes nimbly out around the wagon, looking back, owlishly.*

TEXAS (*still flabbergasted*)

Now whut'd you do that fer!

HANNIE

Do *whut* fer?

TEXAS

Marry Buzzey.

HANNIE (*slyly*)

You hadn't come along.

TEXAS

Whut was the matter 'th you?

HANNIE

Wasn't nuthin' the matter 'th *me*.

TEXAS

They musta been. Sump'n serious.

HANNIE (*archly*)

Well, I don't see how you figger that. You see—I

divorced him as soon as—as soon as I found out things. I ain't married to him *now.*

TEXAS

No, that's right. Course you— Looky here, you ain't aimin' to marry him again, air you?

HANNIE

I ain't told him I wouldn't.

TEXAS

I won't allow it!

HANNIE

You won't! I don't see how you c'n he'p yerself. You don't know whut a plumb fascinatin' way Buzzey's got.

TEXAS

I'd like to know whur he keeps it!

HANNIE (*with vulgar mirth*)

Well, I hain't a-gonna tell you *that!* And besides, Mr. State of Texas, I don't think I like the way you got a-twistin' yer tongue around the man I married onct and might marry again!

TEXAS

If he didn't treat you right onct, he ain't apt to do it the second time. Whut'd he do, anyhow—*special?* Why'd you divorce him—you musta had to give some reason.

HANNIE

Well, 'f you're interested, the Ikes come and tole me 'bout Buzzey carryin' on 'th another womern.

TEXAS

Well, the damn fool!

HANNIE

Whut'd you mean?

TEXAS

Had *you*—and went to carryin' on 'th another womern! He musta been crazy 's a suck-egg mule!

HANNIE

That's whut I thought. (*Confidentially.*) Only—you see—I quit carryin' on with him myself, and I guess he thought he had to do sump'n. You know the way a man *will*. And besides, I think I'll jist tell you—(*She looks around and sees that no one is within hearing.*) I fixed it up myself—the whole thing!

TEXAS (*astounded*)

You did!

HANNIE

Well, I had the Ikes do it fer me. They found a womern some'eres—I don't know whur or who—and Buzzey done the rest.

TEXAS

My goodness, I mighta knowed it!

HANNIE

You won't go and tell on me, though, will you?

TEXAS

Me? No, sir. (*Largely.*) You're safe 'th *me*, little womern!

HANNIE (*amused*)

Well, that's right big of you, I must say! Now then —how 'bout tellin' me about yerself? That red-headed womern. You might start with her.

TEXAS

I made her up.

HANNIE

I knowed that. Jist wanted to see 'f you'd own up.

TEXAS

I don't think a *ordinary* man ud be safe around you! You're too damn smart! I might as well tell you about *me*, though so you'll *know*. I was borned in Texas, and I ain't got no present job, though I c'n do most anything I want to—*if* I want to—and I'm on my way some'eres now, I don't know whur.

HANNIE

Look at them lightnin'-bugs!

TEXAS (*ruffled*)

I was tellin' you about myself.

HANNIE

I c'n listen and look at the same time.

TEXAS

I'd consider it quite a favor if you'd look at me 'stid of lightnin'-bugs.

HANNIE

I couldn't *help* myself, if you had a light on yore tail —like a lightnin'-bug!

TEXAS

Now looky here, a man cain't hit a womern that's smart-alec, so whut *can* he do?

HANNIE

Let her have her own way, I guess. (*Relenting.*) I wanta hear about you, though, honest I do.

TEXAS

Well, I've had my ups and downs, as you might have a notion of in yer noggin. I been and saw the world. Onct I run a ranch in Texas as big as the state of Alabama. I've saw them Kansas cyclones that drove a wheat-straw th'ough a live-oak tree, and I ain't never been licked by mortal man. Onct a whole *crowd* of mortal men—cowpunchers—*tried* to lick me, and they was seventy-three of 'em by count, and they all had shootin' arns.

HANNIE

And whut'd you do?

TEXAS

Hit their heads together. And run—

HANNIE

I thought you musta run.

TEXAS

Run *after* 'em! And ever one I ketched up with, I'd scalp with a ole piece of tin offen a plug of Horse-shoe tobaccer. Why, half of Texas to this day is full of them bald-headed cowpunchers! And furthermore —even their kids is all borned 'thout a mite of hair on their heads!

HANNIE (*sarcastically*)

And whut else you been doin' besides scalpin' the state of Texas?

TEXAS

I don't think you take me serious.

HANNIE

I take you serious, but I don't swaller yore kind of fishbait. Not right at first. I got to git used to it.

TEXAS (*strangely*)

Oh, you're gonna git used to it! Whut I see, I *see!* And I see a lot about me and you that's been wrote down some'eres fer a long time. Looky here. I wanta tell you sump'n I never told nobody— I wasn't borned.

HANNIE

What!

TEXAS

I wasn't borned in the ordinary way. (*Waggishly.*) I'd a-thought you'd knowed that by lookin' at me— (*Lyrically.*) No, sir! I'm gonna tell you jist the way it was— Way out on the Texas prairie jist this side the tall mountains set a small cabin made outa oak. And in that cabin, set a man and womern with a growed gal as purty as purty could be! Name was Liza. Mornin' come, she'd hop on her pony to ride the range, her old pap and mammy a-runnin' after her to stop her. "Come on back, Liza," they'd say —"the plains is full of coyotes. Them big old growly

mountain b'ars has started to sharpen up their spring teeth." And seein' she didn't answer, they'd say, "Don't go fur, then, and come back soon." And away she'd go! Greased lightnin'! Dynamite on wings! Her pony stretched hisself out like a tentpole headed West! When she was seven mile and half away, she'd stop and look around. Now a funny thing! She had rid into a valley whur a river used to flow in the year 1. The tall grasses stood up like trees. A quair kind of a roarin' like lions come from some-'eres among the tall grass. She'd git off her horse, look around, suspicious like, and go into that valley on foot. She'd stay all day. Who did she see thar? Whut did she do thar? Fer it soon was evident's the nose on yer face, she was gonna produce a infant. Who was its pappy? Whut kind of a roarin', hell-shootin', brawny big mountain of a man was she a-consortin' with? Somebody! With a whole valley fer his house, and a sky fer a roof over him! A name-less wonder of a giant with all out of doors to call his front room. A secret man that roared when he talked and shuck the ground like a earthquake rum-blin'! Fin'lly one night—Liza lay in her pappy's cabin. Wild hosses come a-nickerin' and trompin' around. Great big b'ars as high as hills begin to growl sump'n fierce. All of a sudden, there was a crash and a bang and a clatter! Thunder and hail and lightnin', hell f'ar and brimstone! The cabin whur Liza lay cracked itself wide open from stem to stern, beam-end to beam-end, hind-end to gullet! And when the smoke cleared away, out *I* stepped, full-size, dressed to kill, in a ten-gallon hat, boots and

chaps, a gun in ary hand, and both guns a-poppin'! And that's how I got started!

HANNIE (*carried away, in spite of herself*)

I b'lieve to my soul you're tellin' the truth!

TEXAS

Course I'm tellin' the truth!

HANNIE (*recovering herself*)

The truth—and whut else?

TEXAS

You don't think I'd lie to you—jist after meetin' you—do you? You're the first womern I ever met up with that I felt like explainin' to jist how I come on the earth. And if it's kinda hard to swaller right at first, you shorely can believe my doin's down here at Verdigree, cain't you?

HANNIE

Well, I—

TEXAS

Mopped up the place slick as grease on a possum! You'd orta be proud to know me!

HANNIE

I never seen a man like you in my life!

TEXAS

They *ain't* another man like me—in *anybody's* life!

HANNIE

If you ain't a lot of talk!

TEXAS

Look here, they's two ways to keep outa trouble, and one of 'em is to talk. I've talked my way outa more didoes 'n you c'n shake a stick at. You don't wanta git all wropped up in scorn fer a feller's tongue a-workin'.

HANNIE

I always noticed the feller that's Old Busy Tongue, when it comes right down to it, he's a coward and a skeer-cat. I bet now, if the marshal from down here at Verdigree was to come a-sneakin' up on you now, you wouldn't know whut to do 'th yerself.

TEXAS

Do! First I'd put my fist right smack kudab *th'ough* him, and clean out on the other side. Nen after I'd got that done, I'd tromp on him 'th both feet, nen th'ow him in that pot of bilin' water and cook him good.

HANNIE

Fiddlesticks! You wouldn't do no sich of a thing! (*Thoughtfully, puzzled.*) They's sump'n funny about you, though—fer all yer talk. Sounds kinda true, even when it ain't.

TEXAS

It's gospel—ever word I speak!

HANNIE

Can you look over a tree?

TEXAS (*puzzled*)

What's that got to do with it? I'm six foot tall.

HANNIE (*with some relief, as if something had been answered*)

Well, that's quite a size. Whur air you a-goin' after today, Mr. Texas, if I ain't a-buttin' in?

TEXAS

I ain't said I was goin' anywhurs—*yit*. It all depends.

HANNIE

Depends on whut?

TEXAS (*casually*)

Oh, on which a-way the wind blows.

HANNIE (*casual herself*)

Well, it 'pears to me the wind has died down complete.

TEXAS

I been a-noticin' that. Trees ain't hardly a-movin'. I'd shore hate to exert myself more'n a tree.

HANNIE (*rising*)

Well, you c'n sleep here by the f'ar 'th the rest of 'em, less'n you're afeared they'll bite.

TEXAS

Oh, when it comes to *bitin'*—

HANNIE

And see how you like our comp'ny.

TEXAS

I could tell you a lot about that right now.

HANNIE

You better save it. Here comes the Ikes with warter. (*The* IKES *come in with buckets and start pouring water in the pot.* PAP *comes in and pokes up the fire, putting more wood on it, so that it burns brightly.*) I'm a-goin' to bed. (*She goes toward the wagon.*) Good night, everbody.

ALL

Good night.

HANNIE (*roguishly*)

Tell Buzzey "Good night" fer me, somebody. And tell him I said he could sleep right bang up clost to the hot f'ar—and *imagine!*

[*She goes up into the wagon.*

PAP

Well, it's bed time fer all, I reckon. We go to bed 'th the chickens. Gonna stick around, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS

'F you got a bed fer me.

PAP

Well, they's a half a bushel of oak leaves right under yer feet.

TEXAS

Them'll do fine.

[*He starts raking them up into a pile.* BUZZEY *comes in.* THEY ALL *begin to lie down around the fire.* PAP *goes to sleep almost immediately.*

TEXAS (*raising on his elbow—to the* IKES)

Say, you, Red and Black, 'd you ever sleep in a tree?

RED IKE

Black here was borned and raised in a tree. Had a long tail, they tell me, and used to swing from one limb to anothern.

BLACK IKE (*grinning foolishly*)

Did not!

TEXAS

How do you sleep at night? Like a log?

RED IKE

Not us! Cain't hardly sleep none a-tall, Mr. Texas. The least little ole sound—!

TEXAS

That's fine. Me—I sleep like a log. Why, I got fifty cents on me, and I kinda wondered 'f you wouldn't do me a favor?

BLACK IKE

Shore, we would, wouldn't we, Red? (*Eagerly.*) Anything you say, Mr. Texas.

TEXAS

Here. (*He tosses it over.*) 'D you reckon you c'd sleep down the road a piece jist yond' side of that bend? I'm kinda 'spectin' someone to come along—and I'd be much obliged 'f you'd skin up the road quicker'n lightnin' and tell me 'fore he gits here—that is, if he *does* take a notion to come this a-way. I don't want to hurt him—and that's the God's truth.

RED IKE (*grinning*)

Reckon we know who it'll be, don't we, Black?

BLACK IKE

'F he comes along we'll be yere 'fore you c'n say "Jack Robison," won't we, Red?

RED IKE

'Fore you c'n say "Jack," Mr. Texas!

[*They go out down the road.*

BUZZEY (*who has been listening*)

'Spectin' someone, 'd you say, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS

Oh, you never can tell.

BUZZEY

I offered them little fools five dollars apiece to git back to my farm, and they wouldn't take it. And here they go and gobble yore fifty cents like they hadn't saw a nickel since the flood rolled away.

TEXAS (*lazily*)

Funny, ain't it, the way you take to some people. And some people you cain't set down in eighty feet of.

BUZZEY

'D I hear you say you didn't sleep so good?

TEXAS

Me? No, sir! When my mind ain't a-worryin' 'bout nuthin', I sleep like a dead man.

BUZZEY (*with studied casualness*)

And how is yer mind now, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS (*smiling*)

They ain't nuthin' on it, a-tall, Mr. Hale, nuthin' a-tall. I'm as easy in my mind as a new-born bronc! And sich a deep dark hole of sleepin' as I'm goin' into will be wrote down in books! I bet I don't wake up till the sun does. And I bet I dream!

BUZZEY (*grimly*)

Yeah, I reckon you will.

[*Silence. Darkness creeps in among the trees and blots out everything but the burning fire. A night owl hoots eerily; a frog by the creek bank begins to croak.*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Dawn, the next morning. The fire has died down, but the embers still smoulder, and steam rises from the boiling water. A faint grayish light steals into the woods. A rooster crows, very near. PAP *wakes, sits up. The rooster crows again.* PAP *scrambles to his feet, finds a rock and steals out quickly. There is a flurried squawk, and in a moment* PAP *comes in again carrying a dead Dominecker rooster. He walks quietly, so as to disturb no one, ponders a bit, looks at the pot of boiling water, and making up his mind, hangs the dead bird on the wagon. Then he smiles with triumphant satisfaction, and lies down again.*

In a moment, BUZZEY *rises cautiously on one elbow and looks about carefully at the other men. Then he gets up and is stealing off into the woods with a rheumatic limp when* PAP *lifts himself up and calls in a hoarse whisper:*

PAP

Hey!

BUZZEY (*wheeling about as if shot*)

Sh!

[*He makes signs for* PAP *to shut up.*

PAP

Whur you goin'?

BUZZEY

Sh!

PAP

Whur you goin', I said!

BUZZEY

Criminee!

[*He steals back and motions* PAP *over to one side as far from the sleeping* TEXAS *as possible.* PAP *goes over reluctantly.*

BUZZEY (*softly*)

Now go and lay down again like you was, you hear?

PAP

How's that?

BUZZEY (*a little louder*)

I say, go and lay down again.

PAP

Lay down?

BUZZEY (*nods a worried "Yes" and glances over anxiously toward* TEXAS)

And go back to sleep.

PAP (*grinning*)

Got all the sleep I want. (*He stretches luxuriously, and slaps his thighs.*) See you limpin' like you got the rheumatiz.

BUZZEY

Sh! You'll wake him up!

PAP

I don't keer. 'S daylight, ain't it? Hey, I kilt a rooster! He set in a black-jack tree a-crowin' and I f'ard just one rock and down he come!

BUZZEY

Christamighty, shet up, cain't you?

PAP

A Dominecker rooster not two year old! They say it's bad luck to take the feathers offen a chicken kilt with a rock. Cook him, feathers and all! Course they say that toad frogs makes warts on you, too, but I don't b'lieve that. (*For the first time noticing* BUZZEY's *manner.*) You got the St. Vitus dance, er whut in tarnation ails you!

BUZZEY

Listen—go and lay down and quit a-makin' noise, can't you?

PAP (*suspiciously*)

Whut're you up to?

BUZZEY

Never mind. Do like I tell you.

PAP

My God, is this yore house or mine? I'll do as I like, Mr. Buzzey, and don't you fergit it!

BUZZEY

Listen! You don't wanta lose Hannie, do you?

PAP

Lose Hannie? I ain't a-losin' her.

BUZZEY

No, not *yit!* But it's a-comin'. The first thing you know this here Texas'll be runnin' off and takin' Hannie with him. Nen both of us'll be outa luck. I want her back for a wife, and you wanta keep her fer daughter. Looks like we could work together.

PAP

I don't know whut you're talkin' about. Who said Hannie was jist gonna up and hotfoot it after anybody that come along?

BUZZEY

Looky here, you know about women, don't you?

PAP

Whut about 'em?

BUZZEY (*wisely*)

Onct they've had a man, they cain't get along without one.

PAP

Oh! I reckon that's right. I've knowed a heap of widders that ud take up with anything in pants.

BUZZEY

Well, Hannie's a widder, ain't she?

PAP

Grass. You not bein' dead.

BUZZEY

Grass or no grass, it's all the same.

PAP

Whut was you aimin' to do, then?

BUZZEY (*cautiously*)

Go down here to Verdigree, rouse up the marshal, and tell him whur Texas is at.

PAP

Whut'll *you* git out of it?

BUZZEY

Well, I aim to jist keep after Hannie till she's all wore out, and she'll marry me to git rid of me follerin' her around.

PAP

And whut'd I get out of it?

BUZZEY

Well, if Hannie goes back with me, you're always free to mosey along by my place and see her, ain't you? While if this here hell-raiser tuck her away, he'd likely end up way down in Texas some'eres, and the first you know, he'd trade Hannie off fer ten head of them Longhorn steers—and you'd never see hide ner hair of her again.

PAP (*convinced*)

Sh! Don't talk so much, you'll wake him up! Why in hell didn't you go sooner?

BUZZEY

I meant to, but I overslept.

PAP (*outraged*)

Overslept! This ain't no time fer oversleepin'! It's the time to shake yer tail and oversleep afterwards! Git on there now, and do whut you're a-gonna do!

BUZZEY

Don't hurry me.

PAP

Stand around a-gabbin'! *Git!*

BUZZEY (*annoyed*)

I'm a-gettin'.

[*He starts out.* TEXAS *sits up, yawning.*

TEXAS

Oh, is that you, Mr. Hale?

[BUZZEY *stops as if shot.*

BUZZEY (*swallowing*)

Ye-yeah, it's me.

TEXAS

Goin' some'eres?

BUZZEY (*uncertainly*)

Oh—g—goin' down along the crick bank.

TEXAS

Don't slip and fall in. Good mornin', Pap.

PAP

Mornin' yerself. Sleep all right?

TEXAS (*stretching lazily*)

Slept fine. But had sich a dream. (*To* BUZZEY, who *is stealing out again.*) Hey, Mr. Hale! Come here, while I tell you. (BUZZY *comes back reluctantly.*) I was jist tellin' Pap Rader 'bout a dream. Quarest dream I ever had! It seemed like I was layin' here 'th my head up clost to the f'ar, when I heard feet a-comin' and a-goin', and voices a-shakin' and spittin' out words, and I looked up and they was two men a-standin' over me. One of 'em—

PAP (*worried*)

This was a dream, wa'n't it?

TEXAS

This was a dream. One of these men had a bald head and looked like a buzzard, and the other'n looked like he was gonna fall plumb apart from bein' put together so loose.

PAP (*with an unconvincing laugh*)

Sounds like me and Buzzey!

TEXAS

Looked like you, all right. But the resemblance stopped right there, fer these two put their heads together, and I could hear every word they said, though they kept sh-ishin' each other, and whutta you think they was aimin' to do?

BUZZEY

I—I couldn't tell you.

TEXAS

Them low-down wart-hogs was plannin' to sic the marshal on to me and put me in jail.

PAP

Why—why, whutta you know about that! You dreamt that, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS

That was a dream, all right. Give me a cold sweat to think of it. I'm shore glad I woke up when I did, 'cause it felt like, in the dream, I was tied hand and foot a-layin' here on the ground, and couldn't move a muscle.

PAP

Hee, hee—kind of a narrow escape, wa'n't it?

BUZZEY (*meaning his own*)

Shore *was* a narrow escape!

TEXAS (*casually*)

I'm glad it turned out to be a dream, fer if it hadn't a-been, I'd a-been compelled to rouse myself up, and cut the liver and lights outa both of them fellers, and th'ow 'em to the dogs, before breakfast.

PAP

That ud be the thing to a-done to 'em, all right. Ain't that right, Buzzey?

BUZZEY (*in alarm*)

Ye-yeah, that's right. Well, I guess I—I got business down the crick a while.

TEXAS

Don't be in no hurry, Mr. Hale. Pap'll be givin' you some of that rooster a-fore long.

BUZZEY

Rooster!

TEXAS (*smiling*)

Dominecker rooster, kilt with a rock.

PAP

My God!

TEXAS

Whut's the matter? 'D I dream that, too?

PAP

Holy Moses!

TEXAS (*easily*)

Don't you worry none, Pap. I won't tell on you fer killin' somebody's rooster. He made a lot of noise, anyway, and someone ort to a-kilt him. (*Dropping his jesting manner, to* BUZZEY.) Now looky here, you sneakin' pike, don't you never try a trick like that on me, or I'll make stew outa you! You hear me!

BUZZEY

W-whut kind of a trick, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS (*fiercely*)

You know, all right. I heared you. I'll bash yer head in next time. I'm a real easy-goin' man or I'd do it anyhow! And you, Pap Rader, a-listenin' to a sap-sucker like this un. I'd a-thought you had more sense in that pin head of yourn.

PAP

Well, blame me, I don't want you a-runnin' away with Hannie!

TEXAS

Whut've you got to do with Hannie?

PAP

Why, she's my daughter, ain't she?

TEXAS

I don't keer if she *is* yore daughter!

PAP

She's better off with me than she'd be with you.

TEXAS

Oh, is that so? I ain't fit comp'ny, is that it? Well, I'll jist tell you, whut I'm a-gonna do. I'm gonna learn you a lesson you won't fergit! (*Boastingly.*) I'm gonna take Hannie away with me, after all. Hadn't meant to, a-tall. I'll put her under one arm and claw my way to clear down in the Verdigree bottom some'eres outa sight, whur I c'n have her all by myself—and *I don't know*, after that!

PAP

She won't go with you.

TEXAS

She won't, huh? She'll jump at the chanct. I know a thing or two when I see it, I guess. She'd kick you both in the pants if I told her to, and lay down and let me walk on her. (*Vulgarly.*) Well, mebbe I don't mean *walk* on her.

BUZZEY (*outraged*)

You quit it a-talkin' about my fo'mer wife, that-a-way!

PAP

You quit it a-talkin' about my fo'mer daughter that-a-way!

TEXAS (*his tongue unloosed, enjoying himself*)

And you won't never see her again, neither one of you. Why, she'll git so used to me, she'd spit in anybody's face that said a harm word about me! But after I git her well-trained to ride proper, I'm gonna leave her some'eres to git along the best way she can! Learn you two a lesson!

[*The flap of the wagon is thrown aside angrily, and* HANNIE *comes down the steps.*

HANNIE

How's that, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS (*like a punctured bag*)

Eh— Whut're you— Whut?

HANNIE

Whut's all this you're a-gonna do about me?

TEXAS

Why—why—I ain't aimin' to do nuthin'.

BUZZEY

He said he was, Hannie! Said he was gonna walk on you, and spit in yer eye, and I don't know whut all he didn't say!

HANNIE

Shet up, I'll tend to this! (*Looking* TEXAS *over with*

great scorn.) Lemme have a look at this hell-raisin' wonder. He don't look so big, and he don't look so handsome, but he's got a way with the women!

BUZZEY

Give it to him, Hannie!

PAP (*turning on* BUZZEY)

Shet up, you!

HANNIE

They drownd theirselves by the drove in the Rio Grande whenever he comes around! He's scalped the state of Texas, and run off 'th their wives. He was borned full-size with boots and chaps, and some giant for his pappy!

BUZZEY

Yanh, sink a canthook in him!

PAP

Aw, let him alone, Hannie!

HANNIE

He's fit his way into jail and outa jail, and he's a ring-tail tooter with a tongue a mile long, and if he don't like to use it!

TEXAS

Now, Hannie—!

HANNIE (*blazing mad*)

Don't you Hannie *me!* Gonna run off with me, and me under yer arm, is that it?

BUZZEY

He *said* he was, Hannie! Burn him up! Blister him!

HANNIE

Gonna git me well-broke to like it, so I'd spit in my pappy's face if he said a word agin you, was that it!

BUZZEY

Ever damn word, the side winder!

HANNIE

My God, if I ever seen a lantern-jawed cock-eyed idiot that couldn't say "Boo!" to a flyer, you're it! Ever time I look at you, I git ringworm!

TEXAS

Now Hannie, listen to me—

HANNIE

I listened to too much a'ready—

TEXAS

These two was plannin' to give me up to the law so I got mad and my tongue run off with me, cain't you understand?

HANNIE

Understand? I'd druther see a cow full of wood ticks than to look at you.

TEXAS (*miserably*)

Aw, Hannie—

HANNIE

Whyn't you beat it up the road, and find a place that

ud suit you better? They ain't nuthin' here that's in yore style! And they ain't a soul here that wouldn't like to cut you up and feed you to the coyotes—if the coyotes could stand it! Personally I'd ruther have a nice big piece of a striped skunk! Beat it, I said!

TEXAS (*seeing he's ruined everything*)

I wish't you'd listen to me.

HANNIE

Gether yer things and git!

TEXAS

I ain't got nuthin' to gether.

BUZZEY (*suddenly becoming courageous*)

And don't you never come around decent folks again or they're li'ble to brand and dehorn you!

PAP (*turning on him*)

Shet up you,—let a feller alone, cain't you?

BUZZEY

Well, I—

PAP

Let him alone! He ain't done nuthin' to *you!*

[*There is a crackle of twigs and running footsteps. The* IKES *burst into sight, in wild excitement.*

RED IKE

Hey, Texas, man a-comin'!

BLACK IKE

The marshal from Verdigree!

RED IKE

Big man 'th a big black hat and a pistol!

BLACK IKE

Two pistols, and a ca'tridge belt a-poppin' 'th bullets!

RED IKE

Comin' along the road like a bat outa thunder!

BLACK IKE

Makin' the dust bile!

RED IKE

Hurry up, 'f you don't wanta see him!

BLACK IKE

Swim the crick!

RED IKE

Climb a tree!

BLACK IKE

Hide in the blackberry bushes!

RED IKE

Bury yerself in the ground! Go on, don't stand there!

TEXAS (*quietly*)

How's that?

RED IKE

Man a-comin', I tell you! The marshal from Verdigree a-lookin' fer trouble!

TEXAS

Oh, the marshal.

RED IKE

Well, hain't he the one you thought might come along? Stand there, you bleedin' Jesus! You ain't got a minute!

BLACK IKE

Shake yer traces!

RED IKE

Bust yer britchin'!

BLACK IKE

Rip and rair! Hide and hair! Swaller the air!

TEXAS

Let him come.

THE IKES

What!

TEXAS

Let him come, I said.

RED IKE

Whut! You hain't a-gonna jist stand there?

BLACK IKE

He'll git you!

RED IKE

Th'ow you in jail—

BLACK IKE

Shoot a hole th'ough you!

TEXAS

We'll see about that.

BLACK IKE

Oh! Oh, I see! Gonna give him his money's worth!

RED IKE

Gonna fight him!

BLACK IKE

Bloody his nose!

RED IKE

Cave in his stummick!

BLACK IKE

Knock his years down!

RED IKE

Jamb all his teeth out! Whee, gonna be high ole doin's! (*Jumping around with excitement.*) Fight, fight!

BLACK IKE (*doing the same*)

Bettin' on Texas!

RED IKE

Fight, fight!

PAP (*to the* IKES)

Here, you Ikes—you make more noise 'n thirteen wildcats. (*To* TEXAS.) You ain't gonna run?

TEXAS

No.

PAP

Well, I'm a-bettin' on you.

TEXAS

Much obliged.

PAP

You might get shot.

TEXAS

Well.

PAP

Tell you whut I'll do, pardner. 'F you git shot, I'll bury you nice—and put up a tomb stone made out of a weepin' willer tree. With a sign on it that says "He fit and died."

TEXAS

That'll be nice.

PAP

Oh, it tain't no trouble a-tall. (*He begins fixing the fire.*) In that f'ar— (*He points with a stick.*)—I got hick'ry fer smoke, chestnut fer noise, white pine fer blaze, and oak fer slow-burnin'. That f'ar is the original hell-f'ar. 'F you say so, Texas, I'll give that marshal a little shove, and 'f he falls *in* it, that ain't my fault.

TEXAS (*shaking his head*)

Thanky, jist the same.

PAP

Oh, it wouldn't be a mite of trouble! Here he comes, I guess.

[*After a moment, the* MARSHAL, *a large, rather worried-looking man in a big black hat, comes in with a pistol in his hand. He stops short.*

MARSHAL

Hands up, the lot of you! (*They all put up their hands except* HANNIE, *who has backed up against the wagon steps.*) You too, lady. (*She gives him a contemptuous look, and puts her hands up.*) Now then, Mr. Borned-in-Texas, I've got you again. And this time, you ain't gonna git away. Course it wasn't *me* that let you git away before, jist remember that! My job was to git you before Jedge Snodgrass fer disturbin' the peace, and I got you there. I'd orta had more sense 'n to turned you over to that coward of of a Neb, I reckon. But it's on his head fer lettin' you do whut you done to the jedge and the court-room. Godamighty though, from the looks of things, you musta been full of elephant juice. You must be Mr. Samson, 'fore he got his hair cut! (*To* PAP.) Is he a friend of yourn?

PAP

Yes, sir, he's a friend of mine.

BUZZEY (*butting in*)

He is not a friend of Pap's! Course we knowed who he was, Mr. Marshal, and I was aimin' to sneak off and tell you whur he was at. And Pap here was gonna help me.

PAP (*hotly*)

I was not! I jist had a brain storm fer about a minute a-listenin' to you a-shootin' off yer head! They hain't nuthin' to keep a feller from changin' his mind, is they? (*To the* MARSHAL.) Why, Mr. Marshal, I'd be a purty sap-sucker to go a-turnin' anyone over to a hound-dog like you! I don't like you ner no one that looks like you!

MARSHAL

Mebbe you better consider yoreself arrested, too.

TEXAS (*breaking in*)

Aw, let Pap alone, Mr. Marshal. 'F it's me you're after, well, you got me. We might jist as well hit the pike now, as to stand here a-talkin'.

MARSHAL (*surprised*)

Well, Mr. Texas, you hain't gonna put up no fight? You got more sense 'n I give you credit for. You hain't got a gun hid on you anywhurs, have you?

TEXAS

You tuck my gun away from me, didn't you?

MARSHAL

Yeah, I did.

TEXAS

Well, they don't grow on trees.

MARSHAL (*to* BUZZEY)

Has he got ary gun on him?

BUZZEY

I ain't saw ary un.

MARSHAL

Well. I'm much obliged to you, Mister, for yer good intentions. You c'n put yer hands down 'f you want to.

BUZZEY (*putting his hands down*)

That's all right.

MARSHAL

How'd you happen to git mixed up 'th a crowd like this, anyhow?

BUZZEY (*righteously*)

I ain't *mixed* up with it! I used to be kinda married to this womern here, but—she don't railly b'long to this here kind of crowd any more'n I do. I'm a farmer. Got a hundred and sixty acre up here by Vinita.

MARSHAL

Is that so? How's crops?

BUZZEY

Turrible. These here h'ard hands has run off and left the Jimson weeds and cuckle burrs to smother up everthing I got planted.

MARSHAL

I used to be a farmer myself. 'F you ever need a good hand, you better not make me a offer, I'm li'ble to take it. I git awful t'ard of marshallin' fer a livin'. So that's yer wife, is it?

BUZZEY

Well, I—you see—she used to be.

MARSHAL

Oh! I see. Well, good riddance, I reckon.

BUZZEY (*angrily*)

Who said good riddance?

MARSHAL

Hain't it?

BUZZEY

I never said it was.

MARSHAL (*tolerantly*)

Well, you ort to know.

HANNIE (*breaking in angrily*)

Have I got to stand here 'th my hands in the air all day?

MARSHAL

I reckon *you* don't.

HANNIE

Well, I hope not. Looks like you could shet up talkin' so much and take this here crimernal outa here. I'd be right glad. (*With real disappointment.*) I thought he was sump'n special—a nine-footer—stridin' along 'th his head so high. Now I know he's jist a thing on stilts—and the stilts is all shaky and full of worm holes!

TEXAS

You don't railly mean that, do you, Hannie?

HANNIE

Why don't I mean it?

TEXAS

Thought mebbe you wanted me to think it—jist 'cause I talked about you that a-way. I jist want to tell you—my talkin' don't mean nuthin'—

HANNIE

It may not mean nuthin' to you but it does to me. Oh, you've got yerself into it, Mr. Texas, you might's well like it.

TEXAS

Well, I *don't* like it.

HANNIE

Put me under yer arm and claw yer way down into the bottom, will you?

TEXAS

Go and rub it in.

HANNIE

Ort to scratch yer eyes out!

TEXAS (*making a last attempt*)

Listen—if I git out of this—and come back—whut'll you do?

HANNIE

Spit in yer face.

TEXAS

You shore?

HANNIE (*deliberately*)

Right between the eyes.

TEXAS (*quietly*)

Well, I reckon I won't be *back* here, then. I reckon I won't be back *nowhur* now, till I git my second wind. I been winded 'cause I run seventeen mile 'thout stoppin' and by a cyclone smackin' me plumb in the face. But this is the first time I been knocked holler by a female. Kinda gits a feller down in the mouth.

[*The* IKES, *still with their hands in the air, begin to jump up and down like monkeys on strings.*

THE IKES

Fight, fight, nigger and a white! Fight, fight!

MARSHAL

Here, you! Whut in hell's a-goin' on?

[*The* IKES *stop, abashed.*

RED IKE

Beg yer pardon, mister.

MARSHAL (*his mouth open*)

If this hain't the craziest gang of hoodlums I ever seen! I better git myself outa here 'fore I start to eatin' my shirt-tail er sump'n!

TEXAS

Whenever you're ready, Mr. Marshal.

PAP (*in utter astonishment*)

Ain't you gonna do nuthin', Texas?

TEXAS

No.

PAP

What! Not gonna boot this marshal in the tail and pick his teeth fer him?

TEXAS

No.

PAP

Er cut off his head and show it to him! Hain't you even gonna give him jist one in the jaw fer sample?

TEXAS

No.

PAP

Not gonna do a form thing? Well, fer lands a-livin'!

HANNIE (*scornfully*)

Course he ain't! Didn't you know he wouldn't? (*To* TEXAS.) "Two ways to keep outa trouble. Fight and talk." Don't look to me like he can do ary one!

MARSHAL

Come on, Mr. Texas. You c'n take yer hands down now. (TEXAS *puts his hands down and starts out.*) And if you make one false move, I'll put a hole in you you c'n see daylight th'ough!

TEXAS

Looks to me like I've jist made false moves enough. And got quite a hole in me a'ready, fer my trouble. I reckon I'll jist try to keep from gettin' any more till the one I got is healed up a little bit.

[*He goes out, the* MARSHAL *following. The others*

watch them, PAP *and the* IKES *with their hands still in the air.*

PAP

Well, I'm a cow and a calf! (*He suddenly remembers his hands and jerks them down. The* IKES *follow suit.*) God, I'm paralyzed! (*He rubs his arms.*) Never lifted a finger!

BUZZEY

Whut'd you expect?

PAP

Well, he mighta kicked the marshal on the shins onct, anyhow.

BUZZEY (*joyously*)

I told you, I told you! (*He does an impromptu capering jig.*) Coward and a liar, and a ring toom toom!

[*He grins with crazy exuberance.*

HANNIE

Whut a fool!

[*She starts up the steps.*

BUZZEY (*going over*)

Shore proud of you, Hannie! A womern after my own heart. Glad you come to yer senses. Shore had me worried fer a minute, I tell you! I fergive you, though. Yes sir, I fergive and fergit, that's the way I am. Won't we have us a time, though? Git yer things together quick, and go home with me, right away! Hurry up!

HANNIE (*stopping in astonishment*)

How's that?

BUZZEY

Jump a train to Claremore, git spliced, hitched up together again the same as before! Nen after that, we'll hop another train, and git home 'fore sundown!

HANNIE (*unable to believe her ears*)

Go home with you? (*She laughs uproariously.*) Jawbone of a whale and hock of a terrapin! (*She turns on him, outraged and amused.*) Go home with *you?* Why, you little dried-up blue-nosed old buzzard smellin' of a dead cow in the summer time! Go home with a corpse!

[*She comes down the wagon steps.*

BUZZEY (*bewildered*)

Hannie!

HANNIE

If you knowed whut I was gonna do, you'd have a conniption fit! Come on, you Ikes! We're a-goin' some'eres!

[*She dashes off into the woods, the* IKES *dashing after her like a pair of grinning monkeys.*

BUZZEY (*dazed*)

My God, *now* whut's come over her!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene 2

Two hours later. About 6 A. M.

The wrecked courtroom. At the back, the judge's stand, on its little dais, is turned over; a picture hangs almost upside down above it. One of the windows is broken, benches are overturned. The door stands open, sagging on one hinge.

The MARSHAL *brings* TEXAS in.

TEXAS (*laughing*)

Jist look at this courtroom! Did I do all this?

MARSHAL

Course you did! But they ain't nuthin' funny about it!

TEXAS (*with huge mirth*)

Any kind of courtroom is funny to me. But a *wrecked* courtroom—my, oh, my! And whut goes on in courtrooms is funnier yit!

MARSHAL (*with satisfaction*)

Anh, you didn't think you'd be back here so quick, though, did you?

TEXAS

I didn't think.

MARSHAL

I reckon you didn't. Look at this yere room. Mince

meat! And you shore gonna pay fer it, too. The jedge'll be here any minute now, and mebbe he won't be glad to see *you*, Mr. Texas!

TEXAS

You reckon?

MARSHAL

I *know.*

TEXAS

My, my! Hey, think I'll jist put things to rights a little bit.

[*He starts turning up benches.*

MARSHAL (*threateningly*)

Here, whut're you up to?

TEXAS

This ain't no decent kind of a room to hold court in. Look at that there jedge's desk, will you? (*He upends it, and puts it back where it belongs.*) Now how did that pitcher git plumb upside down that a-way? [*He straightens the picture over the desk, but takes so long doing it, that the* MARSHAL *comes over suspiciously.*

MARSHAL

Whut you tryin' to do 'th that pitcher?

TEXAS

Jist fixin' it so it won't fall down again, till it ort to. And them benches! And that winder! (*With delight.*) I musta been goin' good! I'll tell you, Mr. Policeman,

how it happened. (*Confidentially.*) I musta been drunk.

MARSHAL

Musta been?

TEXAS (*with regret*)

It ain't right, neither, to git so drunk.

MARSHAL

I should say it ain't right.

TEXAS

Why, I mighta kilt somebody. And then whur'd *I* be?

MARSHAL

Whur'd you think you air, now?

TEXAS (*ruefully*)

Yeow, I guess that's right, Mister. You got a head on you! I'll tell you, though, if I'd a-kilt anyone, I'd ruther it ud been you I kilt, 'stid of that spindly little jedge.

MARSHAL

You better be keerful whut you say!

TEXAS

A little runt like him, 'twouldn't a-made no difference. If I kilt a man, I'd want it to be a *man*, or it wouldn't be worth the trouble.

MARSHAL (*with pride*)

You'd find it a hard job to kill me, Mr. Texas, and don't you forget it!

TEXAS

I bet I would, too. But it ud be worth it!

MARSHAL (*doubtfully*)

I ain't so shore I like whut you're a-sayin'—all this yere talk about killin'—

TEXAS

Don't you pay no attention to me, Mr. Town Marshal. Don't you worry yore head about me. I ain't worth yore time. A liar and a thief and a murderer like me—why, you orten't to stay in the same room with me. Whyn't you wait outside?

MARSHAL (*worried*)

Gittin' me worried. I'll jist set here and keep you covered 'th my gun!

[*He takes his pistol out of the holster.*

TEXAS

Whut size pistol you got, Mister?

MARSHAL

That ain't none of yore business! You're a prisoner?

TEXAS (*placatingly*)

I didn't mean no harm. Jist wanted to warn you—that gun of your'n had better be a 44. Why, I *turn* 38s.

MARSHAL (*grimly*)

Well, you'll be glad to know this is a 45.

TEXAS

Oh, that's all right, then! (*He looks out the window,*

grinning.) Jist look at that jail—a-layin' all over Indian Territory!

MARSHAL (*looking at his watch*)

Criminee! Here it is six o'clock! I cain't figger out why Jedge Snodgrass ain't come—I sent fer him long enough ago. (*He looks out the door.*) Well, here he is now, and high time. No, 'taint—it's Neb—

TEXAS

Is that the feller's name that was supposed to guard me in the calaboose—?
[*He grins.*

MARSHAL

That's his name, all right—but I don't see whut's so funny about that?

TEXAS

You hain't tuck a good look at him, then!

MARSHAL

Say, you're a hell of a prisoner, you air! Ain't you got no respect fer the law?

TEXAS

How's that?

MARSHAL

I say, ain't you got no respect fer the law, a-tall?

TEXAS

Me? Have I been a-breakin' the law again?

MARSHAL

Have you been a— Whutta you think I arrested you fer in the first place?

TEXAS (*regretfully*)

If I don't have the damndest time! Seems like I'm always breakin' some law or other 'thout knowin' it. Must be might nigh a thousand laws in this yere country. Why, I break one ever time I turn around to spit!

[*He spits.*

MARSHAL (*outraged*)

Quit it a-spittin on the floor!

TEXAS

My God, I guess that's a law, too! Law! A man's walkin' along a purty road a-singin'. Up comes a marshal 'th a gun, drags him into a ugly courtroom. The jedge gives him twelve days. Whut fer?

[*He sits down glumly.*

[NEB, *very much patched up, comes in at the door.*

MARSHAL (*grinning in spite of himself*)

If you ain't a sight now—!

NEB (*resentfully, glaring at* TEXAS)

You'd be a sight, too, if a mule kicked you!

MARSHAL

I guess I know whut mule's been a-kickin' you! (*He grins.*) Whur's Jedge Snodgrass at?

NEB

He's a-comin', I reckon.

MARSHAL

Well, whyn't he hurry up?

NEB

Guess he cain't.

MARSHAL (*exasperated*)

Well, why cain't he? Ain't he up yit—and it six o'clock? Here I go and ketch him this runaway prisoner, and now I got to go and wait a half a hour fer him to git here! Why's it tuck him so long?

NEB (*angrily*)

Ast *him* why it's tuck him so long! Don't ast me!

MARSHAL

Whew! Ain't in a very good humor, air you?

NEB

Well, whut'd you go and put a wild-cat in my jail fer?

TEXAS

I'm sorry, pardner, I didn't mean to th'ow you out the winder. They ain't no hard feelin's, I hope.

[*He starts toward him.*

[NEB *leaps back with a scream, snatches up a chair, and stands with it poised over his head, hysterically.*

NEB

Git away from me! Stand back there, er I'll shore brain you 'th this cheer!

MARSHAL

You must be skeered of him, Neb.

NEB

He better stand back, I tell you!

TEXAS

I ain't gonna hurt you.

NEB (*wildly*)

Marshal, cain't you call him off! I ain't a-skeered of him, but I'm shore li'ble to hurt him! Git back now, I told you!

[*A grim little man hobbles in at the open door.*

MARSHAL

Good mornin', Jedge!

[*The* JUDGE *goes and sits down behind his desk without a word.*

JUDGE (*after a moment, coldly, rapping on his desk*)

Order in the courtroom! (NEB *drops his chair, but stands holding it in readiness.*) I ain't a-goin to pay no attention to the rightfulness or wrongfulness of procedure this mornin'. The court's been defied and spit on, and I'm gonna do some defyin' and spittin' myself! This here feller here has got drunk, which is agin the law. He's smashed up the courtroom, which is agin the law. He's broke outa jail after beatin' up the guard, which is agin the law. He's run plumb away, which is also agin the law. Fer gettin' drunk, I only sentenced him to twelve days in the calaboose. Now then—addin' on to that—fer smashin up the courtroom and fer breakin' outa jail—

NEB

And fer beatin' up the guard!

JUDGE

And fer beatin' up the guard, yes, sir, fer all that I'm gonna sentence him some more.

MARSHAL

Whut about fer beatin' up the Jedge?

JUDGE

Shet up! Nobody ast you to speak! I'm gonna sentence him then—fer gettin' drunk, fer resistin' officers, fer disturbin' the peace, fer escapin' and fer damagin' property—and mebbe—in case anyone dies—fer murder. That'll be six months in jail and a fine of a hundred dollars. Mebbe I better make it two hundred. Now then— (*To* TEXAS.) Have you got anything to say?

TEXAS

I—I don't think you ort to sentence me that-a-way, Jedge—

JUDGE

Why not?

TEXAS

Well, I ain't got two hundred dollars—

JUDGE (*haughtily*)

That ain't no excuse.

TEXAS

And you ain't got no jail.

JUDGE

Whut! Whut's the matter 'th the jail?

TEXAS (*abashed*)

Well, I—I reckon a cyclone struck it.

JUDGE

D' you mean to tell me—! (*He jumps down from his dais, and hobbles rapidly to a window, and looks out. He turns on* NEB.) Whut'd you let him tear the roof offen yer jail fer!

NEB (*terrified*)

I—I didden *let* him. He jist done it, Jedge.

JUDGE (*disgusted*)

Didn't let him!

NEB

And he wouldn't a-done it but—but he went and tied me up first.

JUDGE

Tied you up! Whut kind of a guard air you, anyway! Whut's the use of havin' a jail 'f you cain't keep a feller in it?

NEB

I don't know, Jedge.

JUDGE (*apoplectic*)

Don't know! Well, I know jist whut you c'n do, Neb Withers. I'm gonna turn this prisoner over to you again, and if he gits away this time, you c'n serve his sentence and pay his fine.

NEB (*miserably*)

But, Jedge, they ain't no jail to keep him in.

JUDGE (*grimly—going back to his desk*)

Well, you'll jist have to keep him with *out* a jail, then.

NEB

But Jedge, I—I cain't keep him with me 'f he doan wanta stay.

JUDGE

You got handcuffs, ain't you?

NEB

Do I have to handcuff him to *me?*

JUDGE

That would be a good idy.

NEB

But Jedge—I cain't have *that!* I'm a married man!

JUDGE

That don't make no difference!

NEB (*righteously*)

Jedge, I know that ain't a-gonna be right.

JUDGE

Shet up!

NEB

It ain't!

JUDGE

Have you got a better idy 'n that, then? We got to do sump'n with him.

NEB

Well now—the marshal here ain't married.

MARSHAL (*advancing on him, fiercely*)

I'll break yore neck!

[NEB *snatches up his chair again.*

JUDGE (*pounding on his desk*)

Order in the courtroom! (*A frowzy middle-aged giggling woman, looking as though she had dressed hastily, her hair stringy and uncombed, comes in at the door. The men turn to look.*) Oh, my God! Whutta you want in here, Miz Foster?

MRS. FOSTER (*gives a short high excited giggle, and slides into a chair*)

Oh! It's a court, ain't it? Open to the public? I seen you all a-comin up the road, and thought I'd see whut you was up to, so early in the mornin'. Is that the prisoner? Why, if 'tain't the same one you had here yistiddy! My, that big, strong un! Howd' do, Prisoner? Glad to see you back! (*She flutters a hand at him.*)

JUDGE (*pounding on the desk*)

Order in the courtroom!

MRS. FOSTER

Don't you mind me, Jedge. I ain't gonna be a mite of trouble. Jist gonna scrouge down here and watch things. You don't even have to think about me. Jist go right on 'th yore jedgin'. My brother that used to steal hogs alwys said, "They ain't no use in goin'

up before Jedge Snodgrass, fer you're shore to git ninety days in the calaboose, wh'er you're guilty er not." Course he—

JUDGE (*outraged*)

Order, I said!

MRS. FOSTER

Course Davy was alwys *guilty*, Jedge, I'll say *that* fer you! Looked like he jist couldn't keep his hands offa hogs. I'll never fergit one time he seen a—

JUDGE (*pounding on the desk*)

Miz Foster! 'F you don't shet up a-talkin' about hogs and things, you'll have to leave the courtroom!

MRS. FOSTER (*huffily*)

Well, I must say! I ain't interferin' 'th justice, am I? You'd think I was tryin' to, the way you talk—

JUDGE

I didn't say you was interferin'. I jist said *shet yer mouth!*

MRS. FOSTER

Er I ain't tried to kick up no rumpus or nuthin'. I jist come in and set down, and you go to jumpin' on me!

TEXAS (*going over toward her*)

I beg your pardon, lady, but you're a-gettin the Jedge all excited—and the more excited *he* gits, the harder it's a-gonna be on me. So—d' you reckon you'd not say another word fer a minute er two, like a good girl, nen we'd appreciate hearin' yore voice

again, a-soundin' like a gold trumpet, the way it does.

MRS. FOSTER

Why, Mr. Prisoner! Whut a nice man you air! I hope they don't give you much of a sentence!

TEXAS

Sh! Now then, Mr. Jedge, whut was you a-sayin' when this lady come in?

JUDGE (*snapping*)

How'd I know? (*Rebelliously.*) 'F you think it's a cinch to run a court when people air alwys a-buttin' in—!

TEXAS (*placatingly*)

Sure, I know it must be a hard job, all right. I wouldn't have yore job fer nuthin'—

JUDGE (*belligerently*)

Well, whut's the matter 'th my job, I'd like to know! 'F you don't stop a-criticizin' me, I ain't gonna hold court.

TEXAS

I ain't a-criticizin' you, Jedge—

JUDGE

Won't go on 'th the trial—'ll jist turn you a-loose and not *have* none, you don't stop a-makin' remarks—!

TEXAS

That wouldn't be right, Jedge, not to *try* me, now you *got* me here. Jist a-wastin my time—

JUDGE (*sulking*)

First everbody interrupts me, and now you go to sayin' you wouldn't have my job fer nuthin'—!

TEXAS

But Jedge, I only meant 'cause it was sich a *hard* job—

JUDGE

Oh! Why didden you say so—! You all conspirin' again' me anyhow—I'm a good mind not to go on.

TEXAS

Aw, go on, Jedge, nobody meant a form thing—

JUDGE

Well, if they's any more a-blockin' of justice, I'm gonna jist walk out the door and not come back.

TEXAS

Nuthin' else is gonna block things, Jedge. You jist go right on a-jedgin'.

JUDGE

Well then. Order in the courtroom! As I was a-sayin' when Miz Foster come a-buttin' in—

MARSHAL (*interrupting*)

You wasn't a-sayin' anything, Jedge, it was *me*.

JUDGE (*pounding*)

Order, I said!

MARSHAL

Neb here had been a-puttin' you up to handcuff this

prisoner to me, and I'd jist said to Neb I'd break his neck. And I will, too!

[*He glares at* NEB.

NEB

You better keep yer dirty hands offa me!

JUDGE (*pounding*)

Here, here! (*To* TEXAS, *wildly.*) You see there, if 'tain't one thing, it's anothern! Shet up, you two, quit it!

MARSHAL

Beg yer pardon, Jedge, I'll shet up. But if that little wart ever opens his head to me!—

NEB

Don't you call me no little wart!

JUDGE (*fiercely*)

Shet up!

[*There is a moment of silence, then* HANNIE *and the* IKES *rush in at the door.* HANNIE *runs over to* TEXAS *at once.*

HANNIE

Well, Godamighty, Texas! If you hain't a purty un! No gumption! I'm ashamed of you! (*To the* MARSHAL, *fiercely.*) You let this man alone, you hear, or they'll be trouble! You had a lot to do anyway, breakin' in to our camp and makin' everbody stand around 'th their hands in the top of a sycamore tree!

[*The* JUDGE, *with icy rage, comes down from his*

desk and to everyone's astonishment, puts the gavel in HANNIE'S *hand.*

JUDGE

Here! *You* run this court, you're so *smart!* (*To the* MARSHAL.) Mr. Marshal, I'm gonna git someone to fix the jail, and if you let this prisoner git away while I'm gone, I'll shore *crown* you when I git back!
[*He hobbles out angrily.*

HANNIE

Well, of all the— Whut's the matter 'th *that* ole mustard plaster? Whut'd he give me this here thing fer? Oh! That was the Jedge, wa'n't it? (*In high humor.*) Well, you heared whut he said! "Run this court yerself," didn't he? That ud be a good un! I'd do it right! I'd tear up the courtrooms and burn down the jails. I'd turn all the prisoners loose, let 'em run hog-wild. I'd give 'em money, I'd show 'em the road. That's the kinda jedgin' I'd do!
[*She goes toward the* JUDGE'S *stand.*

MARSHAL

Now look out, you better stay down from there!

HANNIE

I'd scalp all the guards, th'ow the marshals in the crick!

MARSHAL

Git down from there, I told you!

HANNIE

I'd burn all the law books, and start all over. I'd

tell nobody whur to stand, and nobody ud tell me whur to set!

MARSHAL (*outraged*)

This hain't right, it hain't reg'lar! And if you don't shet up, I'll arrest you for contempt!

[*The* IKES *make a leap at him. The* MARSHAL *fumbles for his pistol. But he has forgotten all about* TEXAS, *in his anger, and turned his back on him.* TEXAS *quickly knocks the pistol out of his hand. The* IKES *jump on it, scrambling for it. The* MARSHAL *makes a jump for it, but is too late.*

TEXAS (*interfering*)

Here, shoot yerself, you crazies! Gimme that gun! (*One of the* IKES *hands it over.*) Well, damned if it hain't mine, anyway! I thought I reco'nized it! Whur's yer own pistol at?

MARSHAL (*outraged*)

I'll fix you, ever damn one of you! I'll have the law on you!

[*The* IKES *snicker.*

HANNIE (*pounding*)

Here, here! Is it the law you're talkin' about, Mr. Marshal? Here's the law! This thing! A polished piece of post-oak a-poundin' on a holler piece of pine! That's the law!

[*The* MARSHAL *turns on his heel, disgusted, and starts toward the door.*

TEXAS (*covering him*)

Wait jist a minute! Do you want a piece of lead in yer left kidney? Whur you goin' in sich a hurry?

MARSHAL (*sullenly*)

No place!

TEXAS

Goin' after help, I reckon. You better set down here and behave yoreself. (MRS. FOSTER *has risen, frightened to death, and is going toward the door.*) You, too, lady.

MRS. FOSTER

I want *out!*

TEXAS

Set down. (*She scurries back and sits down, close to the* MARSHAL. NEB *has snatched up his chair again, and stands shivering in the corner.*) Put that cheer down. (NEB *puts it down reluctantly.*) You better set here by the marshal, too.

[NEB *goes over and sits down. The* IKES *begin to jump up and down in crazy excitement.*

THE IKES

Fight, fight, nigger and a white! Fight, fight, nigger and a—

TEXAS

You, too! Shet up! [*They stop.*] Now then! [*He grins with delight.*] This is jist the kind of court-room *I like!* The law—with its teeth pulled—and the prisoner with a shootin' arn! *This here is justice!*

And I guess I better make the most of it while I'm able. It don't come to a feller often. Now I got my pistol back and my stren'th back. Now I'm myself again. I hadn't orter ever laid myself li'ble to the br'ars that scratch people like you-all. I'm *savin' my* blood—to make a worth-while *river* out of! I'm shore powerful glad to 've met you-all. And I don't wish you no more bad luck than the cholery morbus. See you all in hell!

[*He starts to go.*]

HANNIE

Jist a minute!

TEXAS

Well?

HANNIE

Don't be in no hurry!

TEXAS (*grimly*)

I've fooled around enough in these parts. It ain't healthy.

HANNIE

Air you as blind 's a bat?

TEXAS

I ain't got no time to waste a-answerin' fool questions. You've let me in fer enough now.

HANNIE (*angrily*)

Me? Why, you overgrowed razorback, *I* have?

TEXAS

Yes, *you*.

HANNIE

I'd like to know how!

TEXAS

Now looky here. Not two hours ago, you got up on yer year, and told the marshal to tote me off to jail fer you couldn't stand me around! And that hain't all! Before *that*, you tuck sich a mean crack at me that I was knocked fer a barrel of staves, and didn't keer *whut* happened to me. Do you think I'd a-let that bastard of a marshal a-tuck me off so easy, if you hadn't gone and stuck a knife in me up to the handle!

HANNIE

Blamin' *me*, is that it?

TEXAS

Blamin' you! I'd orter jerk yer hind leg off, and th'ow it in yer face!

HANNIE

Try it, and see how fur you git with it!

TEXAS

Fer two cents I would. But I got better things to do, thanky jist the same. So long to you! And be damned to you!

HANNIE (*levelly*)

If I tuck good aim, I could haul off and brain you 'th this here piece of wood they call the law.

TEXAS (*appalled*)

You're about the meanest womern I ever seen! First you git me in trouble, nen you want to brain me!

HANNIE (*coldly*)

I ast you a minute ago if you was blind 's a bat.

TEXAS

I don't pay no attention to fool questions.

HANNIE (*with finality*)

That tells on you, Mr. Texas. Now I'm gonna give you a little advice 'fore you start out of here to scalp the state of Texas again. Listen—when anybody asts you a fool question, it's worth a-lookin' into, fer it might mean sump'n. That's all I got to say. Now you c'n beat it.

TEXAS (*pausing*)

Am I as blind as a bat? Well, no, I ain't.

HANNIE

You air, too.

TEXAS

I ain't!

HANNIE

You air!

TEXAS

I ain't!

HANNIE

You air!

[HANNIE, *furious, throws the gavel at him. He picks it up, grinning.*

TEXAS

Now I guess I got the law on *my* side!

[HANNIE *comes down from the desk, slowly.*

HANNIE

Now then, you c'n do things fer yerself. I'm *th'ough* with *you*. I thought mebbe yer head wasn't quite as thick's a board. Now I know it's thick 's the Rocky Mountains—and then some! You're as green as grass, and ignorant 's a blind goose in a thunderstorm. You don't know two whoops about women, and whut you *don't* know about *anything* would make thirty million books full of close printin'. When you first come along last night, I kinda tuck to you. God knows why I didn't have more sense! I thought you stepped right off a mountain some'eres. I thought you was full of shine like a scoured pot. I thought if you set, the sun ud set. Nen this mornin', when I heared you shootin' off yer head, I was mad as a settin' hen, fer about five minutes. When I ast you jist now if you was blind 's a bat, I mighta knowed the answer! *Course* you're blind as a bat—blind as forty-seven bats! If you wasn't, you'd see I've hotfooted it clear here to Verdigree, waded th'ough weeds and bresh and got chiggers on me all the way from my feet to whur I set down! And whut fer? To try to git a fool of a man outa trouble that's had a landslide in his head, and cain't even remember who he's supposed to be! Now, git outa my way!

TEXAS (*amazed*)

Hannie!

HANNIE

Don't you *Hannie me!*

TEXAS

You cain't leave here *now!*

HANNIE

Oh, cain't I? Move yerself away from that door.

TEXAS

Do you mean everthing you jist said?

HANNIE

Course I do, you fool! Includin' "Git away from that door, and let me outa here."

MARSHAL (*jumping to his feet*)

I hain't a-gonna stand any more of this! I never seen sich goin's-on in a court of law! Makin' a fool outa me, and the courtroom, too! Blamed if I don't—

TEXAS (*turning the pistol on him*)

Set down, and don't you move a eyelash, er I'll shoot it off.

[HANNIE *marches out the door.*

MARSHAL

Neb, you cowardy skeer-cat! 'F you had a little get-up and guts, you wouldn't set there— Come on and help me, cain't you?

NEB

I—I—I cain't he'p you none, Marshal. I'm all crippled up now!

[*The* IKES *make a running leap out the door.*

TEXAS

Here, here! (*The* MARSHAL *advances on him.*) Git back there. You heared me! Now you've made me let Hannie git away, you clumpin' fool! Couldn't you a-set still fer five more minutes!

[PAP *and* BUZZEY *run in.*

PAP

Hey, Texas! Thought mebbe they was shootin' you at sunrise! Mighta knowed they wouldn't be! Whur's Hannie goin' in sich a hurry?

TEXAS

I don't know. She give me hell, and beat it.

PAP

Give you *hell?* She must be crazy about you, to take so much trouble!

TEXAS (*suddenly, struck by an idea*)

Hey, Pap! Do me a favor?

PAP

Shore.

TEXAS

Take this here pistol, and hold the marshal here a while. I got business to tend to! Here, take it!

PAP

I—I— (*Uncertainly.*) I don't know—I might shoot myself! Whut're you up to, anyway?

TEXAS

Never mind, now! Tain't a-gonna hurt you none to

he'p me out, is it? You hold the marshal here fer me a little bit, whutta you say?

PAP

I don't want to go and git mixed up with the law that-a-way— It ain't safe.

TEXAS

In a hour, I'll be back and git you outa here, I tell you! Come on, like a good feller! Thought you was my friend—

PAP (*weakening*)

Well, I—

BUZZEY (*breaking in*)

Don't you do it, Pap! Cain't you see whut he's up to? He's gonna git Hannie and run plumb away with her, like I told you!

TEXAS

Why, you little blue-faced ole buzzard, you! (*He shoves the pistol into* PAP'S *reluctant hand.*) And this, too. (*He forces the gavel on him.*) I jist wanta do sump'n. Been a-wantin' to fer a long time! (*He picks* BUZZEY *up, and shakes him briskly, like a dog shaking a rat.*) I ort to hurt you, but you're too damn little! (*While he is shaking* BUZZEY, *the* MARSHAL *gives a leap and lands on* TEXAS' *back.* TEXAS *drops* BUZZEY, *and shakes the* MARSHAL *off. The* MARSHAL *springs at him again furiously, and* TEXAS *strikes him full on the jaw. He goes over, knocked out cold.*) That'll take keer of *you* fer a little bit! Gimme my gun, gimme that thing, quick! (*He grabs*

gun and gavel.) I've spent entirely too much of my time in this neighborhood! It don't pay—!

[*He dashes out the door.*

PAP (*staring after him, admiringly*)

My, I like that feller!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

The roadside again, an hour or so later. The sun has risen and a golden light slants in among the trees. Mockingbirds, larks, sing in the branches. The fire still burns, its smoke rising. The IKES *are sitting flat on the ground about ten feet apart, each with a hat full of blackberries picked from the roadside.* RED IKE *has his mouth wide open and his head thrown back;* BLACK IKE *is throwing blackberries, one by one, at the yawning mouth.*

RED IKE (*after several unsuccessful attempts*)

You cain't hit me.

BLACK IKE

You cain't *ketch.* Open yer mouth.

RED IKE

It's open.

BLACK IKE

Wider.

[RED *opens his mouth as wide as possible.*

Th'ow yer head back. (RED *does so.*) Shet yer eyes.

RED IKE

They're shet. (BLACK *takes careful aim this time, and is successful.* RED *chews.*) 'S about time.

BLACK IKE

Open yer mouth. (RED *obeys all instructions.*) Wider.

Th'ow yer head back. Shet yer eyes. Tight. (*He picks carefully among his berries, gets on his knees, leans forward and throws something in* RED'S *mouth, and jumps back again, quickly.*) How's that un?

RED IKE (*chewing*)

'S all right, kinda sandy. Holy—jumpin'—Jesus! [*He shudders and spits desperately, trying to clear out his mouth.*

BLACK IKE (*grinning innocently*)

Whut's the matter?

RED IKE

Anh, you've went and th'owed an ole stink bug in my mouth! (*He jumps up, picking up his hat full of berries, and throws them wildly, hat and all, at* BLACK *who scrambles away and dashes off into the woods, snickering.*) Come back and fight. You coward! I'll fix you! (*He sits down again.*) I'll eat up all yer berries.

[*He begins to eat them out of* BLACK'S *hat.*

BLACK IKE (*popping back in*)

Aw, I hain't had none yit.

RED IKE

I don't keer. Th'owin' a stink bug down a feller's th'oat.

BLACK IKE

Don't eat 'em all.

RED IKE (*smacking his lips*)

Shore good.

BLACK IKE

Red.

RED IKE

Well?

BLACK IKE

I didn't know it was a stink bug.

RED IKE

Oh, you didn't?

BLACK IKE

No, I *didn't*. I thought it was a spider.

RED IKE

Oh! Well, that's all right, then. Set down, and I'll hit *you* now.

BLACK IKE (*sitting down about five feet away and opening his mouth*)

Hit me, then.

RED IKE (*picking up a berry and throwing at the open mouth*)

There.

BLACK IKE (*chewing*)

Missed.

RED IKE

Missed, hell. Open yer mouth.
[*He throws again.*

BLACK IKE (*chewing*)

Missed again. (*He leans over, grabs a handful of*

berries and stuffs them into his mouth.) I cain't wait. I'm too hongry.

[HANNIE *comes down the steps of the wagon. She looks forlorn and distressed.*

RED IKE (*snatching up the berries*)

Here, don't eat 'em all up! Hannie ain't had none yit.

[*He gets up and holds them out to her.*

HANNIE

Whŭt is it?

RED IKE

Blackberries.

HANNIE (*shaking her head*)

No.

RED IKE

They're gooder'n any you ever saw. Me'n Black found 'em side of the road.

HANNIE

I don't want any.

RED IKE

You ain't had no breakfast a-tall.

HANNIE

I ain't hongry.

BLACK IKE (*coming forward*)

Me'n Red'll go down here to that place the aidge of the woods, and swipe you some mushmelons, won't we, Red?

RED IKE

Mushmelons and watermelons both.

HANNIE

I told you I hain't hongry, and I *mean* I hain't hongry.

BLACK IKE

Aw, Hannie, 'tain't right not to eat. Hey! We'll go and find you some eggs in that farmhouse down yander.

HANNIE (*with finality*)

I don't want eggs. I don't want no breakfast, and I'd thank you to shet up about it.

BLACK IKE

Oh! She'd thank you to shet up, Red.

RED IKE

Shet up, yerse'f.

HANNIE (*to herself*)

I don't know whur he could be—

RED IKE

How's that?

HANNIE

Did I say anything?

RED IKE

You said, "I don't know whur he could be."

HANNIE (*after a moment*)

Well, I don't. Go and see 'f you c'n find him anywhurs.

RED IKE

Texas? Why, last we seen of him, he was in the courtroom—

HANNIE

I ain't talkin' about Texas. I'm talkin' about Pap.

RED IKE

Oh. (*To* BLACK.) She's a-talkin' about Pap. She don't know whur he's at.

BLACK IKE

I ain't *deef*.

HANNIE

I'm a-gettin' right sick of this place, and the quicker we move from here, the better I'll like it. You Ikes scout around and see 'f you cain't find Pap. He couldn't have went fur. Quick's you find him, we'll beat it—and I hope to God I never come this-a-way again. I'll be a-getherin' up things—

BLACK IKE

Hain't you gonna wait and see 'f Texas comes?

HANNIE

Whut's Texas got to do with it?

BLACK IKE

Well, I—

HANNIE

Nuthin' is the answer. Now git on outa here.

RED IKE

Whut about Buzzey? Want us to find him, too?

HANNIE

I'd plumb fergot all about Buzzey!

RED IKE (*grinning, wisely*)

That's whut I thought.

HANNIE

Don't think so much, you'll rupture yerse'f.
[*She begins gathering up pots and pans, and throwing them at, and into the wagon.*

RED IKE

Come on, Black—
[THEY *start off.*

HANNIE

Don't ferget whut you're goin' after.

RED IKE

You hain't in a very good humor, air you?

HANNIE (*snapping at him*)

Shet up, 'f you don't like it. (*They go out. She picks up a battered tin pan and throws it petulantly at the wagon.*
[TEXAS *comes in along the road, quickly.*

TEXAS

Hannie. (*She turns, sees him and, without a word,*

goes quietly toward the wagon steps.) You ain't runnin' away from me, air you, Hannie?

HANNIE

I doan know you from Adam.

TEXAS

Don't you do me that-a-way, Hannie.

HANNIE

Whut a-way?

TEXAS

Not havin' no words with me.

HANNIE

I had plenty of words with you before. I wish I never *had.*

TEXAS (*seizing the opening*)

Nen whyn't you play like you never *seen* me before? I jist come along the road this minute, see, and who do I spy but a purty womern all by her lonesome? Nice place you got here, lady.

HANNIE (*playing the game, but without amusement*)

Thank you.

TEXAS

'S a fairish mornin' 'th all them mockin' birds singin' in them ellums. Heared lots of meaderlarks 's I come along, too.

HANNIE

Yeah, they sing.

TEXAS

Purty. How's all yer folks?

HANNIE

Dead, thank you.

TEXAS (*with mock sympathy*)

That's too bad. Tyford fever?

HANNIE

The war in Cuby. *Rose*-uvelt.

TEXAS

Oh!

HANNIE

You may think this is funny, but it's jist plain silly to me.

TEXAS (*acquiescing*)

That's whut I think. (*Gravely.*) Listen to me, Hannie. I hain't got much time. I got to talk to you. I never seen a womern like you in my life. You got me buffaloed complete. I don't know whe'r you like me or cain't stand the ground I walk on. All I know is, we're sump'n alike. I've roamed all over and never seen a womern before that was half as crazy as me. You're *twice* as crazy.

HANNIE

Thank you.

TEXAS (*with passion*)

You're crazy and reckless and wild. So'm I. You're walkin' the earth temporary like you knowed sump'n

secret. So'm I. You don't belong to nobody. You make a feller wonder big and step fur. You got eyes and hair—*everthing* a little better'n the next womern, and you suit me down to the ground. I git awful lonesome bein' all by myself, and it looks like you would.

HANNIE (*shortly*)

I ain't all by myself.

TEXAS

Well, whut've you got? Yer Pap fer comp'ny. You go travelin' around—with yer Pap—in that ole covered wagon all fallin' to staves.

HANNIE

I like to travel.

TEXAS

So do I. And I'm pe'tickler who I travel with.

HANNIE

Air you invitin' me to travel with you?

TEXAS

I was headed in that direction.

HANNIE (*contemptuously*)

Hunh. Whut'd I git out of it?

TEXAS

Fun. See things!

HANNIE

I been seein' things ever since I was borned.

TEXAS

Camp in the heat of the day in the shade!

HANNIE

That's whut me and Pap does.

TEXAS

Swim in the cricks! Watch it git sun-up and sun-down! See lightnin', hear thunder! Walk on the wind! Burn yer tail-feathers on the sun! Feed natural, sing strong, sleep together! Stop when you feel like stoppin'. Stay put when you feel like stayin' put.

HANNIE

Well, that's sump'n. Pap's alwys in a hurry.

TEXAS

Well, Godamighty! They's more fun than travelin' 'th yer old man.

HANNIE

Is that so?

TEXAS

I don't have to tell you that, do I? When a feller travels, he wants to travel all by hisself, er in some other kinda comp'ny besides his relations. A man—and a womern to match him, that's the proper idy!

HANNIE

Hunh. If it's jist a man I wanted I could have Buzzey again. The fact is—I've made up my mind: Buzzey c'n *have* me. Now you know.

TEXAS (*blandly*)

Will he travel?

HANNIE

Course he will.

TEXAS

Course he *won't*. He'd want you to set on his farm again, with yer hands in yer lap—a-shellin' beans. (*Disgusted.*) Hunh! A purty life! Buzzey— Good God! You was so lonesome fer a man you tuck up 'th the first thing that come along in pants. Buzzey, hunh? Old Empty Britches.

HANNIE

He give me purty clothes. He was good to me.

TEXAS

Good to you? Go back to him, then! 'F you went with me, I'd spank yer tail 'f I felt like it.

HANNIE (*with passion*)

And 'f I went with you, I'd scratch yer face fer you reg'lar—and fer good reason.

TEXAS (*coming close*)

I'd call you a wench—and a hell of a goddamned womern!

HANNIE

I'd kick yer shins, and pull out yer hair. I'd blister you 'th my tongue ever couple of days. I'd cripple you—

TEXAS

I'd hate you 'f you didn't! (*Passionately.*) Come on

—*go* with me! Wouldn't see another womern but you. Wouldn't *think* of another womern but you.

HANNIE

Look out now—!

TEXAS (*as before*)

You—you—all the time, day in, day out! When it got night, they'd be me and you, close together, d' you hear me? Me—and you! Like it ort to be! Like it was wrote down! Makes me dizzy!

HANNIE (*breathless*)

Don't talk that-a-way—

TEXAS

You—in my arms! I'd make love to you! Learn you sump'n you never knowed about. Kiss you the way you never was kissed before—

HANNIE (*responding, passionately*)

Kiss me, then—

TEXAS

Hannie!

[*He seizes her in his arms and kisses her.*

HANNIE (*after a moment*)

My God!

[*She pushes him away.*

TEXAS (*rapturously, passionately, his eyes shut, swaying.*)

I'm blind! Lightnin's struck! The world's ended! Kiss me!

HANNIE (*blind herself*)

Whur air you?

[*She finds him. He kisses her, then holds her at arm's length.*

TEXAS

My God! The trees is smokin'! My feet's burnin'! Kiss me!

HANNIE (*backing out of his arms*)

Go 'way, you wicked man! 'S too early in the mornin' fer this kind of talk! (*As* TEXAS *makes a move toward her.*) Stay back there, now! 'F you tetch me, they'll be a murder!

TEXAS (*going toward her, ecstatically*)

I knowed you was lyin' about Buzzey!

HANNIE (*backed up against the steps*)

Anh, it ain't safe here! I'm goin' in the wagon—(*She starts up the steps.*) You better not foller me, neither! (*She turns, tantalizingly.*) If you *do* foller me—I won't be responsible!

TEXAS

Hannie!

[*The* IKES *pop up from behind a bush, grinning.*

THE IKES

Yanh, yanh! Hannie's got a feller! Hannie's got a feller!

HANNIE (*coming down the steps, furiously*)

God damn it, I told you to find Pap! (*They pop*

back out of sight again, quickly.) Texas! Quick, we got to be movin' from here! They'll git you again.

TEXAS

I'd fergot all about it!

HANNIE

I hadn't.

TEXAS

Well, am I goin' with you, er air you goin' with me?

HANNIE

I cain't run off and leave Pap.

TEXAS

No, I reckon not! That means I'm goin' 'th you and Pap, then. (*Whistles.*) Holy Moses! Pap! You know whur Pap's at?

HANNIE

Whur?

TEXAS

Last I seen of him he was in the courtroom. Him and Buzzey both.

HANNIE

The courtroom? Whut was Pap doin' there?

TEXAS

Lookin' fer you, I reckon.

HANNIE

The damned old fool! Now I bet he's got hisse'f in trouble. Whut'm I gonna do, Texas?

TEXAS (*starting*)

I'll go back and see about him, quick!

HANNIE

The marshal'll git you!

TEXAS

Naw, sir, not me! You got it all wrong! This time, *I'm* gonna git the *marshal!*

[*He starts out.*

HANNIE

You mean it, Texas?

TEXAS (*turning*)

Did you mean whut was a-goin' on when them Ikes popped in here jist now and ruint everthing? The way you looked at me and egged me on? Did you mean it—about bein' afeared to have me clost to you, or you wouldn't be responsible what happened?

HANNIE

I couldn't make that up, could I?

TEXAS (*ecstatically*)

That's all I want to know, then! I'll drag Pap back here so quick he'll be winded fer life. Nen we'll all beat it from here, to God knows whur—and they'll be sump'n to make up songs about. I been waitin' fer this day!

[*He starts to go.*

[*The* IKES *run in again.*

THE IKES (*breathless*)

Hey, Hannie! Texas!

RED IKE

'F we called Pap, mebbe he'd hear us and answer!

BLACK IKE

Bet he's jist a-hiding out some'eres! (*Calling loudly.*)
Pap! Oh—ho! Pap. Pa-a-ap!

TEXAS

Shet up, he cain't hear you!

RED IKE (*calling loudly*)

Pap Rader! Pap Rader! He-ey!

HANNIE

He hain't here nowhur, I tell you!

RED IKE

Pa-a-ap! Ya-ay, Pap!

HANNIE (*furiously*)

Texas knows whur he is, cain't you hear nuthin'?
[*Away off in the woods, there is an answering reply.*

VOICE

Aye—aye—ah! I'm a-comin'!

TEXAS

Listen!

HANNIE

Whut was that?

TEXAS (*to the* IKES)

Holler again.

RED IKE (*calling*)

Pa-ap! Hey, Pap!

[*They listen, breathless.*

VOICE (*coming nearer*)

Yeah! I'm a-comin'!

HANNIE (*jubilantly*)

Hit's Pap, all right. (*To the* IKES.) Hitch up the team, quick! Put everthing in the wagon! Shake a leg! We're leavin' this place. (*The* IKES *dash out around the wagon.*) Here, Texas, he'p me pour out this warter, and put the kittle in the wagon!

[*She rushes over to the pot.* TEXAS *comes over.*

TEXAS (*banteringly, gaily*)

Git away from that kittle, you'll burn yerse'f! You're too little to lift it, anyway.

HANNIE

Do it yerse'f, then!

TEXAS (*calling out to the* IKES)

Hurry up, you Ikes! Fasten them britchin' straps! Look out, the horses don't step on you!

HANNIE

My goodness! my goodness!

[*She scurries about in absurd excitement and delight.* TEXAS *puts the kettle in the wagon.*

[PAP *runs in, breathless, his clothes and face and hands scratched by the briars.*

PAP (*panting for breath*)

Right of way fer the west-bound mail! Git outa my

way, I cain't stop! (*He runs around and around.*) Oh, there you air, Texas! Knowed you'd be here! Lay back yer years like a jackrabbit, and skedaddle.

HANNIE

Pap, you crazy, what's the matter?

TEXAS

Come on, Pap—we're bound fer the border!

[PAP *stops, puffing.*

PAP

They hain't a minute behint me, I tell you! I give 'em the slip. Buzzey—the marshal. Hurry up, don't stand there!

HANNIE

Whut're you runnin' fer? 'D you see sump'n?

PAP

The marshal and Buzzey and another feller. Right on my heels! Beat it outa here, quick.

TEXAS

They comin' after me, is that it, Pap?

PAP (*nodding*)

And ever one 'th a shootin' arn a yard long!

TEXAS

Well, whyn't you say so in the first place? Come on! The Ikes is hitchin' up the team. We got everthing else— Don't stand there!

PAP

My, oh, my! I got to be on the move, too. I'm a

crimernal myself now, like you. Yes, sir. They'll arrest us both if they ketch us again!

[*He seizes* TEXAS *by the arm and starts hurrying him along toward the wagon.*

TEXAS (*thoughtfully*)

Hey! I jist thought of sump'n! You come ahead to warn me, is that it, Pap?

PAP

That's the idy.

TEXAS

That's right nice of you, Pap.

PAP

Come on now, they hain't fur behind.

TEXAS

I ain't goin'.

PAP (*thunderstruck*)

You ain't goin'?

HANNIE

Texas!

PAP

Well, Godamighty, whut're you up to now? Gonna give yerself up the way you done before, is that it?

TEXAS (*firmly*)

I ain't goin'.

PAP

Well, thunderation! And here I've run my hind legs off!

TEXAS

Listen—you been in enough trouble a'ready on my account. They'll arrest you—fer comin' to warn me. I cain't have that, Pap. You and Hannie and the Ikes jump in the wagon and fly fer dear life. I'll stay here. That'll give you a chance to get away.

HANNIE

You want us to leave you here, is that it?

TEXAS

This here law a-gittin' after me is happenin' entirely too reg'lar to suit me. Gittin' *t'ard* of it. I'll jine you up here by Sweetwater Crick, in a coupla days. Quick 's I c'n git there.

HANNIE

Whut makes you so blamed sure you'll git there—with three men-a-comin' after you 'th shootin' arns? Whut're you aimin' to do?

TEXAS

I don't know whut I'll do, but I'll do sump'n—

HANNIE

Thundermug! I won't have it. (*Decisively.*) If they's gonna be any stayin', I'm gonna stay right here with you.

TEXAS

Hannie, you mean it? I don't think I'd ort to let you—

PAP

Hannie, now it tain't safe—them fellers might—

HANNIE (*her eyes on* TEXAS)

I hain't a-gonna let him outa my sight, I tell you. *They don't grow on trees.* You and the Ikes shake yer tails, 'f you want to.

PAP (*insulted*)

I hain't a-gonna shake my tail, no sich of a thing.

HANNIE

Well, looks like we're all a-stayin'. The Ikes won't budge 'thout *me.* Whut you gonna do, Texas? You hain't gonna give yerself up?

TEXAS (*sitting down thoughtfully by the fire*)

I hain't decided.

HANNIE

Gonna fight 'em all bare-handed?

TEXAS

I might.

HANNIE

Gonna shoot it out?

TEXAS

'F I take a notion.

HANNIE (*worried*)

You got yer pistol, hain't you?

TEXAS (*reaching for it*)

Yeah. Got my pistol—and this thing, too.
[*He draws the gavel out of his belt.*

PAP (*coming over and sitting down*)

Whut's that thing?

TEXAS

Don't you know? This thing represents the law. (*He drops it in the fire. He grins.*) Now then. Seein' 's how we're jist a-waitin'—you might tell us whut happened, Pap. So we'll know whut to expect—

PAP (*rapidly*)

A *plenty* happened. After the marshal came to life again, Buzzey says he'd see to it, *personal*, that they got *you*, Texas. Take the marshal to whur you was at, and help put the handcuffs on you.

TEXAS

Well, that was nice of him.

PAP

And he give the marshal twenty-five dollars to help him make up his mind to say "Yes."

TEXAS

Good ole Buzzey!

PAP

So I give a dash around the blacksmith shop into a plum thicket, and here I am!

TEXAS

And them three—all broke out 'th shootin' arns—was right at yer heels, is that right?

PAP

I'd hate to tell you how clost! (*He looks round at the woods.*)

TEXAS

Hey! I got a idy. We'll give 'em a welcomin' salute! (*He turns around with a grin.*) You see that leaf—on the tip end of the top branch of that oak tree?

[*He points jubilantly, with suppressed excitement.*

PAP

That green un?

TEXAS

Yeah.

[*He pulls out his pistol, takes careful aim, and fires.*

PAP

Hit, by God!

TEXAS (*with a wide grin*)

Clipped it off clean! That ort to worry 'em quite a lot.

[*He puts his pistol back in the holster, and from here on, his air of amused, almost ecstatic confidence never leaves him. The* IKES *run in wildly.*

THE IKES

Who's that a-shootin'?

[*They stop short.*

BLACK IKE

Why, 'f here ain't Pap! Howdy, Pap, thought you was dead!

PAP

Come on over here and I'll tell you sump'n. (*The* IKES *come over obediently, and sit down.*) You know whut we're a-doin'?

RED IKE

No.

PAP

We're jist a-settin' here waitin' to git arrested. (THE IKES *look baffled.*) Yes, sir, that's it. We've all made up our minds that travelin' on the road ain't no fun. So we're gonna give it up, and go to housekeepin' in the Verdigree jail. Ain't that right, Hannie?

HANNIE (*shortly*)

Shet up, I'm thinkin'.

PAP (*to the* IKES)

She says, "Yes." (*He grins.*) Hannie and Texas here is crazy about each other, 'd you know that? Ain't that so, Hannie?

HANNIE

Well, for God's sake, Pap—

PAP (*to the* IKES)

Whut'd I tell you?

TEXAS (*with visionary delight*)

In half a hour, we'll cross Little Spunky, by noon we'll hit Tulsy, in five days we'll all be in Texas—

PAP

Hunh! In five *minutes* we'll all be dead.

TEXAS (*grinning at him*)

Suit yerself, Pap.

PAP (*petulantly*)

You take it awful light, I must say.

TEXAS (*visionary again, absorbed*)

Here we set—all hands idle—and a cyclone with shootin' pistols let loose after us. In them woods, walks the forces of the law, their teeth clamped and their heads not easy. But the roads we're goin' on don't end nowhurs—till we end 'em ourselves. And they's gonna be plenty of hell-let-loose—as well as settin' quiet in fence jambs—afore we do. Ain't that right, Hannie?

HANNIE

Whutever you say, Texas.

PAP (*annoyed*)

Blamed if can make ary one of you-uns out! You talk plumb silly to me.

TEXAS (*grinning*)

That's jist the way everbody else's talk sounds—to *us*, Pap!

[*Through the bushes at the back, appear* BUZZEY, NEB, *and the* MARSHAL. *They have tied the* MARSHAL'S *white handkerchief on a stick, and* BUZZEY *is carrying it above his head, the others huddling close as if for protection.*

BUZZEY

We—we—we hain't a-gonna hurt nobody—

PAP (*after a surprised stare*)

How's that?

BUZZEY

I say—we hain't a-gonna hurt nobody.

PAP

Oh! (*To the others.*) He haint a-gonna hurt nobody. Well, whut you got that white rag on a stick fer?

BUZZEY

Tain't no white rag. It's the marshal's hankuchief.

PAP

Oh. That makes it different.

BUZZEY

We didn't want nobody a-shootin' at us, 'cause we hain't a-gonna shoot at nobody.

MARSHAL (*interrupting*)

We come here peaceable—to talk things over.

NEB (*butting in*)

We heared a shot and we thought mebbe we better—

MARSHAL

Shet up, Neb! (*To* PAP.) Is it all right to talk things over?

PAP

Why, talk till you git the lockjaw, fer all I keer.

Only don't use no *rough* talk—'cause my daughter is here, and she hain't used to it—

HANNIE (*impatiently*)

God damn it, Pap, shet up—

MARSHAL

Howd' do, Mr. Texas?

TEXAS (*after a moment, looking at him*)

Howd' do.

MARSHAL

You see how it is—we hain't a-meanin' harm to no one.

TEXAS

Yeah, I see how it is.

MARSHAL (*relieved*)

We hoped you'd do that.

TEXAS

Set down, why don't you?

MARSHAL

Might do that. (*They all sit down,* BUZZEY *first having stuck the stick with its white handkerchief in the ground.*) Well, I—'s fine weather, ain't it?

PAP

Looks like rain.

MARSHAL

Yeah, looks like rain. We need it, though.

PAP

Alwys need rain.

MARSHAL

Yeah, alwys need it when we hain't got it. When it *do* start, it don't *rain*, it pours.

PAP

Pitchforks and nigger babies.

MARSHAL

Ever time. Well, we cain't complain.

PAP

We c'n complain—but that's all the good it does.

MARSHAL (*with a loud nervous laugh*)

Yeah, that's right. Ain't that right, Mr. Hale?

BUZZEY (*joining in, nervously*)

Hee! Hee!

THE IKES (*bursting out*)

Haw! Haw!

[*They rock with hysterical excitement.*

PAP (*to the* IKES)

Goldurn it, that ain't no joke!

[*They subside.*

MARSHAL (*feeling that the ice is broken*)

Well, well. Reminds me of one time I was farmin' over by Tahlequah and it come a big hail storm in the night—

TEXAS (*breaking in*)

Is that whut you wanted to talk over, Mr. Marshal?

'D you come all the way here like a bat outa thunder to tell us about a hail storm?

MARSHAL

Why, jist a little friendly talk—

TEXAS

Friendly snappin' turtles! Whut'd you want, anyway?

MARSHAL (*jerking out a pistol*)

Put yer hands up! That's whut I want. (*He stands up, quickly, covering* TEXAS *with the pistol.* NEB *and* BUZZEY *jerk out pistols and cover* TEXAS *with them. The* THREE *back away a little so as to keep the whole group in sight.*) Put 'em up.

TEXAS (*lazily*)

My hands?

MARSHAL

And be quick about it!

TEXAS

I knowed they was a ketch to it.

[*He puts his hands up, casually, not the least bit perturbed.*

PAP

Now, goldurn it, you said you wasn't gonna hurt nobody!

MARSHAL

Shet up! And keep outa this.

PAP (*disgusted*)

White hankuchief on a stick, huh?

MARSHAL (*to* TEXAS)

Now I guess you'll come along peaceable, er git yerself riddled 'th bullets. Neb, take his gun away from him.

TEXAS (*casually*)

I don't think I'd come too clost, Neb, 'f I was you.

MARSHAL

Git it, Neb, I told you!

[NEB *advances cautiously.*

TEXAS (*with cool deadly meaning*)

Onct a feller tried to take a gun away from me, and I didn't want him to have it. They wouldn't no one bury him, the varmint. Laid on the ground till he rotted.

NEB (*anxiously*)

You got him covered, hain't you, Marshal?

TEXAS (*coolly, directly to* NEB)

How's yer cripples, Neb? Glad to see yer leg hain't broke. I'd take keer of myself 'f I was you. (*Fiercely.*) Take keer of yerself, I said!

[NEB *scurries back out of reach.*

MARSHAL

God damn it, you blisterin' coward! Whut good air you?

NEB

My legs is a-painin' me turrible, Marshal. I hain't *all here*, cain't you see it?

MARSHAL

Christ! Mr. Hale, go and git that gun offa him.

TEXAS

Oh, Mr. Hale, 's I live and breathe! Come and shake hands 'th me, Buzzey.

BUZZEY (*hesitantly*)

Why, I—you keep yer hands up in the air.

TEXAS

I jist wanted to say "Hello." Hain't saw you in so long.

BUZZEY (*to the* MARSHAL)

You make him keep his hands up, Marshal.

MARSHAL

Git his gun, like I told you.

BUZZEY (*worried*)

You got him covered, hain't you, Marshal?
[*He advances.*

MARSHAL

Yeah, and hurry up.

TEXAS

Come a little closter, Buzzey, and lemme make up fer lost time.

BUZZEY

I hain't a-skeered of you.

MARSHAL

'F you tetch Mr. Hale, I'll shoot and shoot quick.

BUZZEY (*worried*)

You'll look out *whur you shoot*, won't you, Marshal?

MARSHAL

I won't miss whut I aim at.

BUZZEY

Nen I'll shore take his gun from him—don't you worry about that!

TEXAS

Hannie, somebody's went and done me dirt, and I wonder if it hain't Buzzey. I wonder if it wouldn't be worth gittin' shot jist to git even. And while I think of it, I bet it was *his* idy to come in here under a white flag and make out this was gonna be a nice quiet pie supper 'th love and kisses.

BUZZEY (*jeering*)

It *was* my idy, Mr. Texas. When I heared that shot!

TEXAS

Well, all I c'n say at this important minute of my life, is this: To them that does dirt, dirt shall be done. Ain't that right, Hannie?

HANNIE (*her eyes blazing*)

Dirt and a plenty!

TEXAS

Whut'll I do—set f'ar to him?

HANNIE

He ain't worth it!

TEXAS

Want me to shoot him? Skin him alive? Tie him up to a tree and let the coyotes chew on him?

HANNIE

Nuthin' *like* that! Don't you lift a finger, Texas!

TEXAS

What! And let him git away with his sneakin' onneriness?

HANNIE

Naw, sir! He ain't gonna git away with *nuthin'!* (*She hitches up a sleeve, turns toward* BUZZEY, *and speaks with slow and deadly deliberation.*) *You c'n leave Buzzey to me.*

[BUZZEY, *who has advanced, takes a quick step backward.*

BUZZEY

Why, Hannie—why whutta you—?

HANNIE (*as before*)

Come and take his gun off of him, Buzzey. Sich a *nice* gun! Whutta you standin' there fer?

BUZZEY (*frightened*)

Hannie, I—well, fer land's sake, I ain't wantin' no gun!

MARSHAL (*severely*)

Go and git that gun!

BUZZEY

N-Naw, sir! I woulden *tetch it*—'th a ten-foot pole!

MARSHAL (*with outraged indignation*)

Well, Christamighty! Skeered wall-eyed by a weak womern!

BUZZEY

That womern hain't weak. I know her. I hain't a-gonna fool 'th *her*.

MARSHAL

Well! (*With biting contempt.*) Seein' as how you've lost yer manhood—I reckon it's up to me. *My* business is to uphold the law, and I'm gonna do it. I ort to arrest you fer lyin' to me. Here I went and deputized you—give you a gun and everthing—and you go and lay down on me. Gimme that gun back!

BUZZEY

Nanh, I'm afeard you'll shoot me!

MARSHAL (*contemptuously*)

I wouldn't spit on you.

BUZZEY (*relieved*)

Here, then.

[*He hands the pistol back. The* MARSHAL *puts it in his holster.*

MARSHAL

Now then, Mr. Texas, I guess it's up to me to git

that gun. Neb, keep yer gun on these others to see they don't interfere.

NEB

I guess mebbe I c'n do *that*, Mr. Marshal.

TEXAS (*easily*)

I'm shore sorry it had to be you, Mr. Marshal. You're the only white man in the whole shootin' match. But 'fore you take it, I wanta tell you sump'n. Nen you c'n have it.

MARSHAL

Well, make it quick.

TEXAS (*carefully*)

You know, I've made you a powerful sight of trouble.

MARSHAL

You damn right, you have!

TEXAS

Well, that's the way I am! Hain't it turrible! I'm a peaceable man enough, 'f people ud le' me alone. 'F they don't, why I beat up folks right and left and make nuthin' but trouble fer 'em. Git put in jail, git myself outa jail. Make marshals spend all their time a-tryin' to keep their hands on me. You know how a eel is, slippery and hard to handle? That's *me*. A slippery eel with a shootin' arn. Full of trouble. Cain raiser and Hell bender. And so on. Mr. Marshal, whut I'm gettin' at is this: if you take me back to Verdigree again, whut does it git you?

MARSHAL (*grimly*)

I'll have you whur I want you.

TEXAS

Whur is that?

MARSHAL

Whur they put eels.

TEXAS

Whur is that?

MARSHAL

In jail.

TEXAS (*grinning*)

That don't make sense. They put eels in vinegar.

MARSHAL

Sense or no sense, it's jail fer *you.*

TEXAS (*blandly*)

I won't be there long, you ort to know that.

MARSHAL

We'll *see* about that.

TEXAS (*with calculated guile*)

Fu'thermore, I—I'm sorry to mention it—but *somebody might git hurt.* Never c'n tell when I git mad. (*To* HANNIE, *as if he'd just remembered it.*) Hannie! You shore missed it! (*With delight.*) Who'd you reckon I slugged in the jaw back there in the courtroom!

[*The* MARSHAL *involuntarily puts his hand to his jaw.*

HANNIE (*delighted*)

The marshal!

TEXAS

Yes, sir—the law!

HANNIE

Hard?

TEXAS

Sledge hammer!

HANNIE

Worse'n a mule kick, I bet!

TEXAS

Two mules.

HANNIE (*with huge delight*)

Wisht I'd a-been there! 'S turrible to miss *all* the purty sights! (*Struck with an idea.*) Hey, but Texas! (*Indicating the* MARSHAL.) Show me how you done it!

TEXAS (*grinning*)

Aw, he wouldn't like it.

HANNIE

Go on, he wouldn't keer! Anyway—he wouldn't *know* nuthin'—after it happened.

MARSHAL (*with offended dignity*)

Will you two quit turnin' yer backs on me like I wasn't here?

TEXAS (*grinning at the* MARSHAL)

Beg yer pardon. I *did* hit you a whack on the jaw, though, I'm afeard.

MARSHAL

You damn right you did!

TEXAS

Well! Whurever *I am*, they's trouble. Follers right at my heels, jist like a shadder. *Me*—then *trouble*. Jist that close!

MARSHAL

I guess I'll take my chances on that.

TEXAS

All *right*, then. (*He stands up, belligerently.*) *Cart* me off to yer old jail!

MARSHAL

I'll *do* that.

TEXAS (*amused*)

It don't make no difference to me. *Take* me! I have me a good time purt' near anywhur. The truth is, I was borned on the side of the road, and I like to stay there. (*Confidentially, glowingly, to* HANNIE, *ignoring the* MARSHAL *again.*) I like to walk fur, and to cut up jake, and let my lungs out considerable.

HANNIE (*responding, oblivious of everyone else*)

I know you. You like to stick out yer hand, and tetch yand' side of a river.

TEXAS (*as before*)

Like to stand 'th my feet on a horse's rump and my head stuck up over a cloud! Like to walk on the hills that no one can locate!

MARSHAL (*indignantly*)

Jist ferget I'm here, why don't you!

TEXAS (*unheeding*)

Any kind of walls jist gits in my way sump'n turrible! (*He turns to the* MARSHAL.) You see, I'm one kind of thing—and you and yer law is another'n. But go on—*take* me! Course—if *I* was a-runnin' things, I'd keep you and me separated.

BUZZEY (*breaking in, alarmed*)

Look out, Mr. Marshal, he'll talk you out of it!

MARSHAL (*angrily*)

Well, I hain't noticed you a-doin' nuthin'! (*To* TEXAS.) I ain't gonna let you go, that's all they is to it. I ain't goin' back to Verdigree without you!

TEXAS (*blandly*)

'D you have to go back to Verdigree?

MARSHAL

Course I do!

TEXAS

Why is that?

MARSHAL

'Cause I'm a marshal there, that's why!

TEXAS (*turning to* HANNIE)

Whyn't *he* give *up* marshalin'? I heared him say this mornin' he was gittin' mighty t'ard of it.

HANNIE

Whut'd he do? Marshalin's a good job.

TEXAS

I've saw people that was better at it.

HANNIE

Whut's the matter 'th his marshalin'?

TEXAS

He's too good a man to marshal. He ort to go back to farmin'. It tain't so excitin', but it's decenter. Nen he wouldn't have to go on associatin' 'th the crimernal classes—like me. Why, some day—you know whut'll happen to the marshal?

HANNIE

Whut?

TEXAS (*with tense exaggeration, visualizing it*)

Some day, he'll start to arrest a feller—a mean un! Come up clost to him, and start to put the handcuffs on him. And that feller'll reach out—like a cat—like this, see?—and grab him! Claw him to ribbons! Tie his arms in a hard knot!

HANNIE (*catching his excitement*)

Jump on him 'th hob-nails!

TEXAS

Break his legs!

HANNIE

Cut off his years!

TEXAS

Crack his ribs! They'll be blood all over him like a stuck hog! Nen that feller'll slowly draw out a gun

and shoot the marshal six times! (*Turning toward the* MARSHAL.) Kill you *dead*, that's whut he'll do! Kill you dead!

MARSHAL (*in alarm, stepping back*)

You keep yore hands *off a me!*

TEXAS

You don't want *me*, Mr. Marshal. You don't want me.

MARSHAL (*baffled*)

No?

TEXAS (*throwing up his hands, ecstatically*)

There! I knowed you'd come to yer senses! Good old Marshal! Come on, folkses, the marshal says it's all right! Hey, you Ikes, come and help me with the team!

[TEXAS *and the* IKES *dash out around the wagon.* HANNIE *runs over and thumps the* MARSHAL *on the chest, delightedly.*)

MARSHAL (*protesting, weakly*)

Here, here—I never said you could go! Here, you!

BUZZEY (*furiously*)

God damn it, don't you let that crimernal go! I'll have the law on you!

MARSHAL (*turning on him fiercely*)

Shet up! Don't you go and tell *me* whut to do! I guess I know whut I *can* do—and *cain't* do!

BUZZEY

Hain't you gonna take him back?

MARSHAL (*fiercely*)

If I don't—that's *my* business, and you keep out of it, you hear? It's good riddance—a clear case of it—that's whut it is! (*Weakly, remembering his fright.*) *I* ort to know!

HANNIE (*turning on* BUZZEY)

You little trouble-makin' baboon! Come here 'th a white flag, will you, and try to sneak up on Texas that-a-way?

BUZZEY

But Hannie—

HANNIE (*relenting*)

Oh, I know. All on account of me, wasn't it? Damned 'f I don't feel sorry fer you, purt' near. Listen, Buzzey—I hain't yore kind, hain't you found that out by this time? You go and find yerself another womern.

[*She starts putting things in the wagon.*

BUZZEY (*miserably*)

I—I don't want no other womern but you.

HANNIE

Fiddlesticks! The woods is full of 'em. Sorry, Mr. Marshal, I gotta have that stool. A womern's a womern—'cept that some of 'em is plumb nice—and *I* hain't. You go and find you a nice womern, Buzzey—one that's house-broke.

TEXAS (*coming back in, jubilantly*)

Team's ready! Rarin' to step! Pile in, Hannie! Less'n you're goin home with Buzzey.

HANNIE (*grinning, as she goes toward the wagon*)

I don't know him from Adam!

TEXAS (*looking into her eyes*)

Do you know *me* from Adam?

HANNIE (*cryptically*)

No.

TEXAS

No?

HANNIE (*smiling, with deep feeling*)

As fur as *I'm* concerned—you *air* Adam!

[TEXAS *lifts her into the wagon.* PAP *jumps in, also. The* IKES *dash in, ecstatically.*

THE IKES

Wild and reckless, borned in Texas!

[*They put the stepping boxes in the wagon.*

BUZZEY (*mournfully*)

Hain't you a-goin' back with me, neither, Red—you and Black?

RED IKE (*brightly*)

Don't—know you.

BLACK IKE

Never seen you before in all of our borned days!

[*They snicker with delight and dash off.* BUZZEY *goes and sits down by the fire, woebegone.*

TEXAS (*about to get in the wagon*)

Good luck, Mr. Marshal! Keep outa trouble!

MARSHAL

You better beat it 'fore I change my mind.

TEXAS

Jist a minute!

[*He goes over and with the toe of his shoe kicks the charred gavel out of the fire. He picks it up, offering it to the* MARSHAL.

MARSHAL

Whut's that?

TEXAS (*with a wide grin*)

That's the law. Don't you reco'nize it? We hain't got a mite of use fer it. Take it. Course—it's kinda hot —and a little burnt on one end.

MARSHAL (*evasively*)

I—I got my hands full.

TEXAS

Back she goes, then! (*He throws it back in the fire, jumps in the wagon beside* HANNIE, *quickly. The* IKES *can be heard shouting excitedly to the team: "Whoa! Whoa, back!" The wagon backs a little, creaking and swaying.*) Hey! Put that f'ar out, will you, Buzzey? Good-bye, you all! I bet you wish you was us!

[*A whip cracks. The wagon plunges off into the woods. The* IKES *begin to shout jubilantly, tauntingly: "Wild and reckless, borned in Texas! Suckled*

by a bear!"—The hound yaps with excitement. [*The* MARSHAL *looks down the road after them. A slow admiring grin comes over his face. He plucks his handkerchief off the stick and begins to wave.*

CURTAIN

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